

Sri M- BATGAP Interview (# 364)
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Rick: Welcome to Buddha at the Gas Pump. My name is Rick Archer. Buddha at the Gas Pump is an ongoing series of interviews with spiritually awakening people. There have been over 360 of them now, and if this is new to you and you want to check out previous ones go to batgap.com and look under the past interviews menu and you will find all the previous ones organized in four-five different ways. This show is made possible by the support of appreciative listeners and viewers and so if you feel like supporting it, there is a donate button on the right hand side of every page on the site.

I am really honored to have as my guest today Sri M. I have just read his entire autobiography and found it fascinating. Many of you listening and watching will have read Yogananda's Autobiography of a Yogi, and Sri M's autobiography is somewhat reminiscent of that. He has had an amazing life and all sorts of amazing experiences tracking around the Himalayas with his Master; we are going to talk about some of those during this interview.

Well, first of all, let me just welcome you. Thank you Sri M.

Sri M: Thank you very much.

Rick: We had some technical problems before getting started here, so I appreciate your patience while we ironed those out. Let me read a brief biography of you. Sri M was born in Kerala, South India. At the age of 19-1/2 attracted by a strange and irresistible urge to go to the Himalayas, he left home. At the Vyasa Cave beyond the Himalayan shrine of Badrinath, he met his master and lived with him for 3-1/2 years wandering freely the length and breadth of the snow-clad Himalayan region. What he learnt from his master Maheshwarnath Babaji transformed his consciousness totally. Back in the plains, he, as instructed by his Master, lived a normal life working for living fulfilling his social commitments and at the same time preparing himself to teach all that he had learnt and experienced. At a signal from his master, he entered the teaching phase of his life. Today, he travels all over the world to share his experiences and knowledge. Equally at home in the religious teachings of most major religions Sri M, born as Mumtaz Ali Khan, often says, "Go to the core. Theories are of no use". Sri M is married and has two children, and he also just tells me he has two cocker spaniels (Laughter!). He leads a simple life teaching and heading the Satsang Foundation, a charitable concern promoting excellence in education. At present, he lives in Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh, just three hours from Bangalore. And he also just completed a 7500 and something mile walk from Kanyakumari, which is the southern most tip of India to Kashmir, which is way in the North and we are going to talk about that too. So I am really glad we are doing this.

I am wondering if it might be good to start with the story that you tell in your autobiography where a young yogi in the Himalayas doing tapas is approached by an old Muslim man and rejects him and you could take the story from there.

Page 2

Sri M: I have started with the story without mentioning who these people actually are.

Rick: But you learn that as you go along in the book, you can kind of figure it out.

Sri M: Yes, I have left it to be figured out, because I did not want to from the beginning itself say that I was this and I was that and so on, so actually the characters in the story, the young yogi to whom the Muslim, the Sufi man comes is me in some past life.

Rick: Right.

Sri M: And the great yogi who was the guru is none other than Sri Guru Babaji, who for 100s and 1000s of years have been known to exist in the Himalayas. Yogananda Paramahansa in his autobiography calls him Mahavatar, but that was a word - Mahavatar was a term coined by Yogananda Paramahansa to show that avatars have come and gone and there is somebody who is still there.

Rick: But he is not really an Avatar...

Sri M: Well, we call him Sri Guru Babaji. To be very frank with you, we really do not know much about this person except that we know that he exists and is not born in the normal way from like somebody's womb. I would prefer to call him a being with human form; let us put it that way. So I have in my past life been associated with him from some time.

Rick: And in this life, you met him several times?

Sri M: Only twice.

Rick: Twice.....

Sri M: Twice, not more than that. In fact, my coming and being born in a Muslim family and then being found out or discovered again by Maheshwarnath Babaji who was Sri Guru Babaji's senior most disciple as far as I know is part of that story, because I had to learn how it feels to belong to one community and not get accepted by another even though you are most sincere.

Rick: Yeah.

Sri M: So I had to go through this, but because of ones own practical and spiritual personal experience today I have no such problem of being accepted by the community, which is the majority community in India for instance.

Rick: But in the context of this story, you in your previous life were a young yogi and perhaps a little arrogant or something and this Sufi man came to you, treating you to take him on as a student and you brushed him off, rejected him. He said, “okay then I am going to jump in this river” and you said, “do whatever you want”. He jumped in the river and drowned and then Babaji came to you and said, “Bad move.”

Sri M: Absolutely. He said, “bad move, who do you think you are?” Because from the point of view of somebody who has had high spiritual experience, there is no difference between people; external differences I mean. One has to see how mature a person is spiritually and if he needs guidance it is our duty to guide, not ask questions. So that was a big lesson to me plus that you can also go quite high in your meditation and so on and still be left with an ego, an arrogant ego, it is so difficult to cut out. I see sometimes especially when you are somewhat different from others and you have some qualities which may be more than human in some way people start worshipping you and looking up to you. Now, one thing that you have to be very careful is how once own ego begins to expand when this happens, you know, so this was a great lesson to me. So in this life, I have been extremely careful about this in watching myself carefully. If somebody praises me too much, I try to just cut it off and say no, you know.

Rick: Yeah...

Sri M: You must have read the Gita and so on, I am sure, because I kind of know roughly your background.

Rick: Aha.

Sri M: And I think that one of the thing in the Gita that really has affected me, which is “tulya ninda stutir mauni” which means the yogi considers praise and blame as the same. Neither does he get flattered nor he goes down when somebody says, “oh, he is a stupid idiot.” So this is something very-very important.

Rick: I really think it is and I have given a lot of thought to it and talked about it with lot of people because there are so many teachers, some of whom are really impressive, you know they have really attained a very high state, you sit in their presence and you feel very profound darshan. They do wonderful things and beneficial things and yet you find they have these scandals and problems and issues that happen over and over again and there are few exceptions, but it seems to be generally the rule more than the exception, and it really confuses and disillusion people when this happens.

Sri M: You want me to respond?

Rick: Yes, please...

Sri M: I would like to say this, before you choose a person as your teacher give it a lot of time. I think one should not accept somebody based on external appearances. Somebody might look very nice and holy, but that does not mean anything. And the other is it is these disciples who raise you up and take you right up and then suddenly when something happens to them which they do not like they drop you down like hot coals, like a hot brick, so the less dependent you are on these your so-called followers, at least inside, internally, the better-off you are. One has to be careful on this point. Very often some of the scandals are created by people who have had a personal problem, possible; sometimes it may be genuine, cannot say that and sometimes they may also be to test you, this is also possible, so there are so many angles to this. My understanding is when you go to a spiritual teacher, we just need to ask how we are progressing rather than look at other things. When I first went to the Ramakrishna Mission, Babaji had told me spend some time with Ramakrishna Mission, you know the Ramakrishna Mission is a very big organization. So when I went to Belur Math to the headquarters there was this Swami Ranganathananda who is a well-known person. He has lectured. He has written on Upanishad. He was at one time the President of the Ramakrishna Mission also. He was not at that time; he was heading the Ramakrishna Institute of Culture. So when I went as a young man, he called me aside and he said look, you have come to an ashram. Do not think that you have come to the holiest place on earth, because this place is also built up of human beings and when there are many human beings there are this small coccus and circles and so on, but do not get caught up with this. Do not think everybody is a saint. Many of them are here for sadhana, they are not saints, so you stay free of these little groups and try to understand the teachings and if you want to understand the teachings, there are books, there are senior monks - talk to them, figure it out but do not get caught up in this. Now, this can happen in any ashram, because an ashram is a small place where so many kinds of people come together and different people come for different reasons, some come to become successors to the guru, so there is some politics involved. I mean, it is normal, because we are human beings. Therefore, in this situation it is difficult to avoid it, so be careful. That's all you can do.

Rick: Some gurus, I think, Amma, Mata Amritanandamayi uses this expression. She says, sometimes an ashram is like rocks in a tumbler, you know, you put all these rough rocks in a tumblers and it tumbles and tumbles and tumbles and the rocks are getting all their rough edges smoothed out but they all come out nice and smooth in the end.

(Laughter)

Sri M: Ya, maybe not all, but at least some.

Rick: Some, yes. So seems like there are couple of caution area notes here, one would be for teachers themselves to somehow be cautious of and somehow rise above the possibility of having their ego inflated by the attention that comes to them and maybe we can talk about that one little. Let's talk about that one little bit more before we go on to the second point I was about to make. I guess it brings up the question of when does one actually become qualified to become a teacher. I have heard that in Zen circles, it is said that after your awakening you should wait at least 10 years, and so who determines,

and I know you waited a long time and went through all kinds of ordinary life circumstances before you took on any kind of teaching role. How does one know one is ready and how does one avoid prematurely jumping into that role?

Sri M: Yeah, I can give you few guidelines. This is from my experience. When you teach, when one starts talking to people, I did it very hesitantly in the beginning, you have to see the words that you use. Are they really coming from your personal experience or are you imagining them to be your personal experience? Maybe you have read about them somewhere, so this is one thing that can help us to watch out. The other is some of the teachings are not meant for everybody, so when you say the same thing to 100 people there is a possibility that some people take it in one way and some people take in other. So we should have the capacity to judge what is to be said here and what is not to be said here. Or what is to be said there and what is not to be said there. See, this is an extreme way of doing it, I mean expressing it, when Jesus Christ or whoever the great yogi walked at Jerusalem said, "give not that which is good unto dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they cast them down and trample them and turn again and rend you". I mean, I would not say that, I would not call anybody a dog or a swine; it is an extreme way of saying it. So we have to watch this very carefully. Is this person ready to take? Now the problem is when you go into a large gathering and speak, you cannot really choose whom you are talking to. So the only thing is you have to say okay, I will talk, let us see who can take it up and who does not.

The other criterion is don't give too much importance to certain powers that may develop in the yogi. So try as much as possible to keep away from all this business of healing and things like that. If you want to have spiritual teaching, it is better to stick to it as the central part of your life. That is the other thing. So these are some of the criteria which I took. The most important, of course, is that unless you have experience it is better not to teach, because if something goes wrong, you would not be able to put it back in order. This is especially so when you come to the yogic teachings. The teachings of Kundalini yoga or the teachings of Kriya Yoga, you can't just teach somebody if you do not know and if you haven't experienced it yourself, because tomorrow if something goes wrong you won't be able to set it right and we are dealing with powerful energies.

Rick. What about teachers that are maybe part way there, can they help people up to a point. For instance, one might be qualified to teach grammar school or one might be qualified to teach high school or college or on the graduate level and you could be very useful as a grammar school teacher even if you would not be qualified to teach at the college level. So in the spiritual sense, do you also see that with spiritual teachers?

Sri M: I think so, this is possible provided they are transparent, sincere and clear and say, look, this I have not experienced, this is very important.

Rick: So honesty and humility.

Sri M: Yes, be very honest about it and say this is what it is said. In fact, even in the Upanishad when the great Rishis taught certain things they said I do not understand how to put this to you, then what about us - ordinary people? So we have to say that, look, this is how it is in the scriptures, this is the sign, this is how much I have practiced, you can also practice it, but beyond that I do not know.

Rick. I remember a line from the Upanishad, I bet you, you can pinpoint it where there is some saying about ultimate reality and then the saying is “perhaps he knows and if he does not know then maybe nobody knows.

Sri M: Exactly. It does not say nobody knows, perhaps he knows or he knows not.

Rick. Right, right...

Sri M: So this is from the Rigved.

Rick: Yeah.

Sri M: It is about creation hymn, which says in the beginning what existed, did this exist or did only the gods exist, or was there nothing around and then it says, who knows, perhaps he knows who is the chief of the gods or perhaps he knows not. This attitude should be something to be kept fresh in our minds. It should not be; this is Rigveda 2000 years ago. Lets not forget it, no-no this is so important.

Rick: So even the Rishis who cognize the Rigveda are admitting that they have their limitations.

Sri M: Absolutely. Everybody. I think as long as you have a human body there are some restrictions, there are some limitations, especially because you are talking about something which is beyond description. Kenopanishad one of the most important of principal Upanishad says, “yadvachanabhyuditam yenavagabhyudyate” “that which words cannot express - that alone is the supreme being, nothing that you worship here”. Now, this is a very sweeping statement. One has to be very careful with this. I am saying the key is to say, “look, this much I know, beyond that I do not know, but these are teachings, practice it and find out for yourself”.

Rick: Yeah. On a related note here is something you said in your book. You said, “No human being with a physical brain can ever be omniscient.” And actually one thing related to it you just said is that teacher saying this much I know and that much I do not know. I sort of find it healthy in case of most teachers if they have some kind of connection with the lineage or tradition, they give homage to a teacher and are not taking upon themselves the whole authorship of the knowledge.

Sri M: That helps. That helps. Like, I belong to the Nath Sampradaya, because Maheshwarnath Babaji was a nath and before him his guru was Babaji who has no sampradaya, I mean we cannot say he belongs to this tradition or that, but I still feel I belong to that tradition of them, so when I teach I usually say this is what the teaching says, you know, and it is a deliberate attempt not to protect myself more than the teaching. It is deliberate, I might have had the experience and when I said in my book, which you said just now, that nobody is omniscient, omnipresent or omnipotent, this connects to your previous question in some way. Many disciples or many followers have begun to consider a great teacher or someone who has become famous as omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient and then when they discover in life due to certain experiences that it is not so then they get completely disillusioned.

Rick: I have seen that. In fact, there was a woman I was arguing with at one point who felt like her teacher was omniscient and I said oh really your teacher knows what we are e-mailing about right now? Oh yes, he is totally tuned in and you know then the woman ended up getting breast cancer and she got very disillusioned, because she felt like her teacher should have known it and should have said something and so on. I hated to say, I told you so but there was that sort of feeling.... you know...

Sri M: If you have a minute, can I tell....?

Rick: Sure.

Sri M: This is an old happening which happened in Tiruvannamalai at the Ramana Maharishi's ashram. There was a young man who came to the ashram and spent three days without food, and he was also in Maun, like Maharshi he did not speak, and then after three days he sends a note to the Maharshi; he is also in maun, Ramana Maharshi hardly spoke. He sends him a note saying, look I have been here for three days, nobody asked me are you hungry, nobody gave me food, and you I have seen you everyday you did not ask me either, and you are feeding monkeys, but what about me? There is a beautiful answer given by Maharshi. He broke his silence to speak to this man. He said, "If you didn't ask, how would I know?"

Rick: That's great!

Sri M: And there are people who think that Ramana Maharshi was omniscient; I think he did not think so himself.

Rick: And yet on the other hand there were some instances where he knew something that it obviously took some deep ability to know. For instance, there was this man who was a painter and he was painting the cave up above, Virupaksha Cave or whatever it was called, and Ramana was down in his ashram and he was standing at the back of the hall during some ceremony that was being held to commemorate some renovation that had

taken place in the ashram and he was feeling so bad that Ramana could not appreciate the work he had done in this other place, and so there was this whole story where Ramana was not supposed to go any place because his health was bad and some attendants found him basically crawling up the mountain on his hands and knees getting all cuts and so on to get up to that cave to see this guy's work and appreciate it. He had just picked up on his thought and felt compelled to go and give him that blessing.

Sri M: There are two points in this; one is the compassion of this person, so important. The second is that it does not mean always one knows.

Rick: Right, right, specific.

Sri M: One may or one may not, its natural, its not as if it is built. The other is, somewhere along the line I think that Babaji used to say this to me - people have misunderstood the Vedantic dictum, which says, "that which when ones known nothing more remains to be known". What it means is not that you are omniscient. Of course, you may be better than somebody else, of course, because the Yogi has certain faculties, but it means that you have got complete satisfaction. You have no more desires to be fulfilled and therefore you do not need to know anything. It means you do not need to know anything, not that you know everything.

Rick: Yeah, the way Maharishi Mahesh Yogi used to put it. He said, "you gain the benefit that what we had were you to know everything, but you do not know everything." You gain this what he used to call the home of all knowledge.

Sri M: Absolutely, I think that is a nice description.

Rick. There is another point that is related to what we have been talking about with Gurus and that is, you know some people feel like they should hang in there with a particular guru through thick and thin no matter what happens, even if the guru seems to be going off the track they just hang in there, because he must be perfect, he must be wiser than me, he must know what he is doing, it seems crazy, but I will hang in there and other people sort of cut-and-run or maybe they move from one teacher to another throughout their life, and so Gurus for them are somewhat transitional figures. In your case, you had one primary Guru, but you also took instruction and guidance and so on from a variety of other teachers. So what would you say about that point.

Sri M: I think that should be left to the aspirant. Different people are made differently. I stuck with one teacher, but this teacher himself instructed me to go and see other people. So there are such teachers. Now, in Sufi for instance, amongst the Sufi, there is no compulsion to stick to one teacher. In fact, after a while the Sufi teacher tells his disciple, now, this is all that I can give you, go to this other guy. You see, so there is no such thing, but there are some people who would like to stick on and hang on and if they are not disillusioned, probably they are doing the right thing.

Rick Archer: Aha, yeah.

Sir M: What you have to watch is do they get disillusioned at the end. And even there is another good thing here. Even if the Guru turns out to be a fake, all the faith that you have put in him and the practice you have done sincerely may help you even if it does not help him.

Rick: That's a good point. Who was it a drover that kind of became a master archer just worshipping a statue and then this teacher came along and told him to cut off his thumb eventually, but.

Sri M: And we have in Kerala a beautiful story, you know the Nambudiri Brahmins of Kerala are supposed to be experts in mantras and snake charming, and snake poison and so on, so the story is - a man who belonged to a very low social scale came to him and wanted to learn how to revive a person who is bitten by a snake. So this guy was very upset with him and, you know he was standing outside and he said, "Eh, matha kushmanda" in Malayalam, which means, "oh rotten pumpkin, he does not know what he is asking for." You know that kind of a thing. This guy in his innocence thought that it was a mantra. So he went away into the forest and sat somewhere near the river and chanted it for a number of years. And one day, a man was bitten by a snake and he was brought to this big Nambudiri Brahmin man and he looked at him and said, "no chance now, take him away to the crematorium." So they were taking him to the crematorium, they had to pass through the side of the river and this guy was sitting there and chanting "rotten pumpkin" "rotten pumpkin". (Laughter)
He got up and said "what is wrong?" They said there is a man we are taking into crematorium. He said, "how can it be? bring him here" and he said "rotten pumpkin" and the guy got up.

Rick: That's great.

(Laughter)

Sri M: You see, faith...

Rick: Yeah, just faith...

Sri M: Energy, complete...

Rick: Devotion, dedication...

So let us get back to your story. We will pick it up in the autobiography. So you were the yogi in Himalayas. Babaji said you made a big mistake rejecting this guy. You do the yogic Kriya to leave your body now and you will be reborn and you were reborn in

Page 10

Kerala in a Muslim family and at the age of 12 or something, you saw this impressive man standing under a tree in the backyard.

Sri M: 9 years.

Rick: 9 years, so there was this man who turned out later to be Maheshwar Babaji. Not Sri Guru Babaji, but your teacher and Sri Guru Babaji's student.

Sri M: Yes.

Rick: And he spoke to you briefly and what happened at that conversation?

Sri M: You mean, when he met me at the age of 9?

Rick: Yes.

Sri M: Yes, now it was in the backyard of our house under a big jackfruit tree and the first thing he asked me, you know I was very frightened in a way, he was a stranger, a very tall big man standing with matted hair; I had never seen anything like that; I was very nervous. So the first thing he asked me was "do you remember anything?" in Hindi, "Kuch Yaad Aaya?" Well, we all speak Urdu at home even though I was born and brought up in Kerala because of the background.

Rick: Right.

Sri M: So I said I do not remember a thing. "I don't remember anything." I was wondering, what remember, what. So he touched my head with his hand and said "over time, you will get to know." This was the only experience I had at that point and then he told me to go back home and I was walking across and when I tried to turn I could not bring myself to turn. There was something which was stopping me from looking back.

Rick: To see if he was there...

Sri M: Yes, then I reached the kitchen and then turned around and he was gone. So I still think he went out. There was a small gate near the compound wall, so probably he did, but the thing was from that day, in the night, middle of the night especially, I used to be kind of woken up from sleep; its not as if there was a presence, but something woke me up and I would then lie down and keep looking at my navel, in the nabhi area, and there would be some kind of a light coming there and it would spread over my body and it was very blissful. So I had many such experiences every night. I think that was my spiritual preparation and that was a spontaneous meditation, because I had not studied anything about meditation till that age. So this went on till I finished my school, college; I had several experiences.

Meanwhile, if you have read the autobiography, I met many holy people around, saints and yogis, and then I got this compulsion to get out. I felt like a bird in a cage, kind of caged in, I wanted to just break and fly and there was this Himalayas beckoning me, of course. I did not even know I was going to meet, Maheshwarnath Babaji; I only knew that something was on and something was there and I had to go, I had to get out of the situation.

Rick: And you had the sense that maybe you were not looking for someone specific to meet, but you had the sense that there must be these great beings in the Himalayas; you had heard the stories and you just had to go and find out.

Sri M: Right. That's right. I heard, I had read. By the time I had also read the Autobiography of a Yogi, and I thought there must be some yogis up there in the Himalayas. I did not expect to meet Babaji, but somebody must be there, and so I went, I went to many ashrams. You know the story, I met many people, but I was not fully satisfied. I kept going. In fact, Swami Chidananda was the head of the Divine Life Society at that point in Rishikesh and he told me one day, I do not think you will stay here, I do not think this is enough. You are looking for somebody high up there, upper reaches, and he warned me "but be careful, there are lots of fakes around."

Rick: Yeah. I remember even one very respected person said, "oh! don't believe all those stories, you know there are just a bunch of hashish smoking sadhus, you are not going to find anybody remarkable up here" and you were getting pretty discouraged. In fact, I think you said in your book, you were about to throw yourself in a river and just you know give up the ghost, and then at that final moment that evening you met Babaji.

Sri M: I was contemplating suicide. I thought you have burnt your boats, burnt your bridges or whatever the expression is, and then you come here and you find nothing here. I mean what will you do? I thought maybe this body is not suitable this time. And especially, the person who discouraged me was a high-up priest in the Badrinath temple and so I thought he must be knowing, he must be speaking the truth. So that is when I met Babaji again.

Rick: Can you recount that experience of when you first met Babaji again.

Keep in mind people listening that we are not referring to Sri Guru Babaji who Yogananda talked about in his book; we are talking about his student, but we are going to keep using the name "Babaji" because that is how you referred him.

Sri M: Maheshwarnath Babaji, but when I say Babaji, I mean him, generally.

So it so happened it was evening time and I had passed the Vyas Gupha and gone up, so I was coming back. I was looking down at the Alakhnanda, the river there is called Alakhnanda, biting down on the rocks, and I said to myself, half a minute is enough to take your life here if you just jump in. Then it occurred to me, let me go back to the Vyas Gupha, which is little further down.

Rick: That is Vyasa's Cave.

Sri M: Yes and now it has become terrible. The other day somebody went and said there are 100s of people there and there is a priest who has set himself up. There is no way you can sit there. In those days, there was nothing. It was just a small cave. So I went back and said, let me meditate for a while before I decide, something may happen, who knows. So I went back and as soon as I reached there, I saw a fire in the mouth of the cave. Now, you know, generally sadhus especially those in the Nath Sampradaya, they have fire always, called Dhunis. So I thought there must be somebody inside, there is a fire here, because when I went this way there was nothing. So I slowly edged myself into the cave and Babaji stood up. The moment he stood up that image flashed in my mind when I was 9 years old, the same tall person with just a small cloth, matted hair, and that big rudraksha which was on his neck, you know it was the same, and then he stood up and his first words that he said was "oh! so you have gone around window shopping and come back?"

(Laughter)

Sri M: I mean he did not use these words.

Rick: Right.

Sri M: But he said, "Accha Ghum Phirkar Phir Hamare Paas Pahuch Gaye" So I said to him, "Babaji, I do not think I am going to leave you forever, believe me". And he laughed and he said, "We will think about it". In Hindi he said, "Dekha Jayega". "We will see."

Rick: You know one thing that amazed me about your book, did you keep a diary while you were going through all these adventures?

Sri M: No. I have not kept a single diary about anything in my life.

Rick: This was 30-40 years ago you were traveling all around and you are actually able to remember what you ate for lunch at a particular place, and I could not possibly do that.

Sri M: No, I couldn't do it myself. The thing is when I wrote this book, every time I sat down and wrote a chapter all the memories would come back to me. The moment I finished, there would be nothing left. Now, if you suddenly ask me about something in the book, I might have forgotten now, so I might probably refer back and then tell you, yes I did say that, because it used to come in a flow and when it was over I had to put my pen down and shut it up for the day, and sometimes for several days I couldn't write but when it came, I had to stay up the whole night because it was like a possession kind of, please don't mistake me, I was not possessed.

Rick: No, I understand, it was just the creative surge that you had.

Sri M: And then all details...which shocked me, myself. I was shocked that I could remember, because I am very bad, my memory is terrible even today.

(Laughter)

Rick: Did you feel like you were being guided by Babaji or you know the idea of a muse that is speaking through you or something?

Sri M: No, it was not as if it was speaking through me, but somewhere somebody was kind of switching on something and the whole thing came out. It was like that.

Rick: Nice. One thing is that in your book, you went around, you saw many teachers, you were often being initiated into this Kriya or that thing, a lot of different instructions and initiations and I can imagine that you would actually be able to practice all these things on a regular basis because there were so many of them. So were you just sort of getting a little taste of this and a taste of that and then you had your main practice that you stuck to?

Sri M: Yes, but whenever I took, like Sri Vidya was given to me by somebody on instructions from Babaji, so during that period when I was supposed to practice it, I did it fully.

Rick: I see.

Sri M: I did not do anything else, I was only doing that. Of course, I had little bit of my Kriya yoga for 10-15 minutes and then I did this. So Babaji's instruction was when you get something practice it fully with complete attention then don't divert your mind, and then when you have touched something and you know probably this is where one understands what has happened then you stop and shift. So when I did one thing, I was only doing that. I was not, drifting around.

Rick: Yeah.

I want to get into some stories of things you encountered in Himalayas. Some of them are pretty amazing.

Sri M: Unbelievable?

Rick: Yeah, might be, some people might be incredulous. And we are going into few of those. But before we get into that, I just want to bring up a general question for you. I do not know how tuned in you are to contemporary spiritual teachers and the whole scene, but there are lot of people coming on who claimed to have had an awakening, personally I think probably there are many degrees of awakening and sometimes these proclamations seem kind of ultimate, like I am awakened and I always feel like there is going to be more. And there are even people, there is a whole kind of category of people who say you are already enlightened, everybody is already enlightened, all you have to do is accept that and you are done, and whereas I have a much more progressive incremental understanding of things that there is a vast range of potential spiritual development and virtually nobody is done because there is always something more. So I am kind of interested in the idea of a road map of higher consciousness and sort of what the range of possibilities is and I think it would be valuable for people to understand that in general firstly because it is inspiring if you realize what is possible, it is like, vow, you know that could be my experience in life and secondly because it perhaps might safeguard the path and prevent people from getting sidetracked in things which really do not have that much relevance to higher state of consciousness but would seem interesting or flashy and so on and also because, just a final point, just because it would safeguard people from feeling like they are done when relatively speaking in terms of what is possible they might just be getting started.

Sri M: Right.... True...

(Laughter)...

Rick: What do you have to say about all that?

Sri M: I think so myself, in some way. The great thing about the spiritual field is that it is actually unending. It is not as if you do and say oh this is over. It is never over. It is vast. It is like the Milky Way. So when somebody says, I am done with and it is over, I feel a little not-so-happy with that situation. Yeah, maybe he is done with something, yes okay, but there is something more, you understand? The important point is about not being sidetracked; you may have some visions, you may have some colors, you may hear some sounds and then if you think you have done everything possible, you have not. I always tell people "do you have as many visions as somebody who has had LSD? - No.

Rick: And even if you do, so what?

Sri M: So what? They also have it.

Rick: Yeah.

Sri M: Well, this is apart from the fact that when talking about Samadhi and different ways of getting into Samadhi, Patanjali in his Yoga Sutra says that chemical process is also possible.

Rick: He does. He says what herbs, mantras, gems and something else...

Sri M: It is very interesting. Because in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali in the Samadhi path, how to attain Samadhi, there are different ways described and one of the things said is Ishvarapranidhana, that means also by surrendering to Ishwara and God. And the next sentence is Aushadhnani. It is also possible through chemicals, medicines. So god and chemicals have been put just 1 foot below each other.

Rick: Oh, in fact you had an experience with the soma plant, we are going to talk about that in a little while. That will be interesting.

Here is a question that came in from Vijay Mukherjee in Dallas. You will probably meet him when you go to Dallas. This is related to what we have been saying here and I have a feeling of how you are going to answer this, but he says, "Is your present state on par with say Sri Guru Babaji? If not, what makes one being so evolved and another less evolved?"

Sri M: Well, Sri Guru Babaji is in a category which normally human beings who are born in a womb cannot compare with. They are there for a special purpose, such beings. So I can definitely not compare with that. Yes, I have had some spiritual experience and I believe that everyone has the potential to touch that. It requires a great deal of hard work. There are no shortcuts possible in this matter. So this is my answer to the question.

Rick: Do you feel that if spiritual evolution is never ending as you just said that eventually somehow all souls will end up being exalted souls like Sri Guru Babaji...Eventually, big - capital E.

Rick: Certainly, I think, but it may take ages before we touch that. It may take ages, but ultimately the evolution is towards perfection, and before perfection it has to go through a grind, so we are going through the grind, come out and then gradually go higher and higher. Every soul's destiny ultimately I think would be to reach the higher stage, but it will take ages.

Rick: Right.

Sri M: It will take time. And therefore every human being has a potential. Recently, when I was on this walk, this long walk, marathon walk, Catholic Bishop from Kerala called me and said is it possible for you to meet the Pope. I said, listen, I am on a walk, if you think I can break it for a few days and go, because after all...So he said, okay. So I went and met the Pope.

Rick: You went to Rome?

Sri M: Yes, I went to Rome, and I had 10 minutes, little more than 10 minutes of personal audience with the Pope, and interesting - I went because he is the head of a vast big church which is hopefully keeping Jesus Christ teachings intact, hopefully. So anyway, he is a person who so many people worship and regard, so I thought it is a good thing and I thought the new Pope is also a new person. So I went to see him. And with great respect, I did namaskar as we do to all holy man and he also did, and we had a chat. One thing stuck me, his words, was he said, "Look, every saint has a past and every sinner therefore has a future". You know this is one of the thing he said which really affected me, so I am saying this any great saint even if it is Sri Guru Babaji at one time must have come from where the ordinary human being is and therefore the ordinary being has all potential to go there at some point.

Rick: That's a good point.

Sri M: It may not be today or tomorrow but you see...

Rick: There is that verse in the Gita, even if you are the greatest of all sinners you should cross over all by the raft of knowledge alone.

Sri M: Prarabhdas before you reach there. And in fact, Krishna also says to Arjuna in the Gita, it is very interesting. He says you know Arjuna, you and I have all been born millions of times, both, difference is that I know and you don't. That's all.

Rick: Yeah. I have a question about that actually, since you mentioned that. There is that verse which is "Never was a time when I was not nor you nor these rulers of men. Nor will there ever be a time when all of us shall cease to be." And that could be read two ways, it could be read in terms of you know we are Brahman, we are the self and the unreal has no being and real never ceases to be or it can be read as individual souls who have always been and will never cease to be with some flavor of individuality; which way do you read it or both?

Sri M: Even a whole tradition in India has been this; it is a kind of controversy really, because if you go the Vedantic way, there is only the Brahman and everything is just temporary, coming and going. Now, there are other streams of philosophy which are as ancient or even more ancient than that.

Like the Samkhya philosophy of Kapila and the Jain, Jain is a very old system. Rishabhadeva's image was found in Mohenjo-Daro, who is the first Tirthankara of the Jains. So the Jains are atheist; they do not believe in God and creator God, but they believe that each soul is immortal and to discover that is the aim of life. When you are free of all distractions and everything then the pure soul shines. Now the only controversy is when that pure soul shines in itself is it the whole Brahman or is it an individual thing, this is something which we have to experience. From my understanding, it takes a long-long time to discover probably that there is only one and that these things do not exist. In your spiritual evolution, for quite a length of time you still retain a little bit of identity. In fact, if somebody asks me to become the Brahman I would maybe refuse because like Guru Nanak said, I like to be the ant that tastes the sugar than become the sugar, because if I become the sugar I don't taste anything. So it is a great thing to in fact even retain a little bit of individuality while accepting the fact that perhaps there is something where there is nothing at all, no individuality.

Rick: I do not know if one has a choice anyway, right?

Sri M: One does not have a choice.

Rick: It just happens when it happens. I interviewed a Vaishnava, Krishna bhakta, a couple of weeks ago and they have this whole controversy between themselves and mayavadis as they call.

Sri M: Absolutely...

Rick: I tried to draw him into that conversation, but we did not really get into it.

Sri M: Oh, yes, in fact Chaitanya Mahaprabhu the founder of this whole system which has become Gaudiya Math, ISCON and so on, he said that if you listen to the lecture of a mayavadi ones you would probably go to hell a hundred times.

Rick: It is little extreme...

Sri M: Yes, exactly, so I think one should not go to that kind of an extreme. You know. Adi Shankaracharya preached the Advaita philosophy of Vedanta, but there are many kinds of Vedanta. There is Vishisht Advaita, there is Dvaita; all that is Vedanta. But I personally would think like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa said you start with duality, then you go to the merger state and then probably at the last you do not exist, only the Brahman exist.

Rick: Coding Maharishi Mahesh Yogi again, he made a good point on this point.

He said this whole issue of whether you merge with god or you stay separate from god in order to worship god, he said it is not your problem. It is something you will consider when you actually get to the point where you could do that. In the meanwhile, do not worry about it.

(Laughter)

Sri M: Yes, in fact there is another point which Babaji, Maheshwarnath Babaji, said to a man who was a complete Vaishnavite. Vaishnavite draw this (vertical lines on the forehead) and Shaivite do this (horizontal lines on the forehead) with ash, so he was talking to him; he said, look at the moment you can only see the feet of the lord, stay with this. When you reach the head then you decide whether you draw this way or this way (horizontal or vertical).

Rick: There are some good questions coming in from people, mostly from India or Indians in the US, but I want to get back to your personal story here for a bit and we will get to these questions. So there are a number of stories that happened in your book which I do not mean to make people skeptical of your whole story but for those who could suspend their disbelief for a moment and just listen to so many things I think they will find them kind of fascinating, and I have just picked a few that jumped out at me. For instance, there was one where you had fever and you were lying in a cave or something and some might attribute this to, you know, delirium from the fever but you actually had the experience of apparently a yeti coming in, so-called the abominable snowman coming into the cave and offering you some kind of cure for the fever, can you touch on that one?

Sri M: Yes, now the thing is I did not say or think that it was a yeti till last when Babaji suggested that it was so. I did not have any such idea. I was sick and I had high fever and I actually saw, this was not a delirium, because the Nepalese guide who was with me also saw it. It is not only that I saw it. He just screamed and ran out of the tent. So there was this thing which was huge, which was whitish and hairish. This much I can remember and it did look like an orangutan or something like that and it came close and it made a peculiar nasal whiny kind of noise. I thought it was trying to say something. I was scared, but I was not scared enough to run, and anyway I was very sick to get up. And it put something very-very extremely sweet into my mouth, it pushed it in, and then the Nepalese guy started screaming and he just went away, but the point is that the thing which was in my mouth was there for quite some time. It was not an illusion that thing which was in my mouth and my fever came down from the next day onwards. These things are facts. And then I had no idea what this was and who this was. So later on when we were going back, I told Babaji, he said, "look don't discuss it with people, because nobody will believe this, just leave it alone". So I said what do you think it could be. He said there are still species which is neither human nor ape.

They are forgotten species, rarely in some areas they still do exist and people call them yeti and various things, abominable snowman, the names are not important, he said there are species that still exists. It is almost gone, but there are a few and they are wise and they are intelligent. It is not that they are not intelligent. This guy was trying to help you.

Rick: Oh! They must be very intelligent if they knew that you were sick in the tent and they had some kind of medicine that they could actually give you, must be very evolved species.

Sri M: So I don't know, when people ask me oh did you see yeti? I say, I don't know, this is my experience. You call it yeti, you call it what you want and from Babaji's description I believe that there must be some species. Darwin has got lot of things about evolution but the missing link has still not been properly solved, it is possible.

Rick: Yeah, okay. Here is another interesting chapter in your book. There was a chapter called, "Kedarnath: Opening the Channels" and perhaps you could discuss little bit of what happened in that chapter.

Sri M: Babaji wanted me to speed up little bit of my cleaning up of the inner channels. He said that the work that you have to do I think we cannot wait for another two lives to get it cleared. So there are other ways of doing it, but it has its plus and minus but I am taking the risk, are you ready for it. I said Babaji I have completely surrendered myself in your hands, whatever you say I am ready to do. So he sent me into that little cave. You know that cave which I am talking about still exist in Kedarnath. There is a little kutir-like thing built over it. When you are walking down and crossing the bridge to go to the Kedar shrine if you look up on the left you will see a little kutir up there on the mountain. Nobody stays there now. Recently, I sent some people to go and look what is happening there. They came back and said there is still little garden like, looks like somebody is coming and going, but anyway. So I went there and Babaji left me in the cave and he went away. I was alone to fend for myself. And three people came; I don't know whether they were people or what, again this is not hallucination. They had those cloths tied like the Jain sadhus or what they use in an operation theater.

Rick: Like a face mask.

Sri M: Like surgeons, yes, and they were wearing some kind of white dress. They were tall. I couldn't see anything except this because it was also hooded. They came and asked me to close my eyes and then all I know was that I was moving, but I don't know where I was moving. They brought me down. It was as if you are going down the tunnel through the stones and then I came into a small room when they removed the blindfold which they had tied. I saw that there was nothing in the room. It was an old room. First, they gave me a liquid to drink. They made me lie down on a slab and then sit up and have something to drink.

It was a very bitter kind of liquid. It was very greenish and probably herbal. I drank it, and then they made me lie down. When I drank it, my whole body started kind of convulsing, little painful. They made me lie down and there was a round kind of a thing like –I don't know how to describe it - it was like a big helmet with a round bottom to it and there were some electric, some cable-like thing coming out of it. They fitted it (on the head - front and behind). There was no injury. It was fitted on the top. And then I laid down. And then I had some experiences which for the first time I was experiencing that I was outside my body and looking down at myself and then from there I was taken somewhere and given some instructions and then I was brought back. I can't give you the time, because it seemed the time was kind of in a different dimension time. When I came back, it was like a jet lag, I am back, and then they took this out and then they again blindfolded me and got me out of there. So I went in front of the kutir where Babaji lived and I bowed down to Babaji and said it is done. He called me and checked me, you are there, okay you go and do your Kriya in the evening, he said we will see. So after that time for a long time whenever I did Kriya at the end of it I felt like lying down in shavasana and I would slowly get out of the body and look down. It went on for sometime and then it slowly subsided.

Rick: I think you said that after that procedure that there was kind of a deep clear unity to your experience too, everything was unified.

Sri M: Yes that's true. There were certain facts and certain experiences which I could not bring together in one piece, and after this it was as if they all were together like the jigsaw puzzle. I saw everything clearly kind of, and I thought that it might have probably taken me many lives to get there if they had not done some kind of a procedure.

Rick: You have any idea who these beings were and where they are from or anything like that?

Sri M: Babaji never said anything about this except to say that they were not from the earth.

Rick: Meaning they might be from some place physically distant or from a more subtle realm, celestial realm or something?

Sri M: I have never followed this up, but from my experiences later on in life and having understood various things I think they could have been from another realm.

Rick: Hope you don't mind my asking you questions about this particular stories. I don't want people to brush you off as a cook, but I think those who are open to the possibility that there is more to life than meets the eye might find these things interesting. I certainly did.

Sri M: Yes, true, I agree, because you know it is so funny to think that you are the only living being in this universe. It is so ridiculous. If you come to think of it, we are smaller and smallest pack of sand when you compare with the whole Milky Way.

Rick: Oh yeah...

Sri M: And yet we think that anything that has to be there should be here.

Rick: Yeah, actually I heard recently that there are more stars in the known universe than there are grains of sand on all the beaches in the world, just you know trillions of stars. You know... I forgot the name of the telescope...

Sri M: Hubble.

Rick Archer: There is Hubble and there is another one that starts with K and is specifically designed, Kepler maybe, trying to find whether there are planets around other stars and they are beginning to find that planets seem to be the norm.

Sri M: Yes, many.

Rick: Its like most stars have planets.

Sri M: Absolutely, so what is the condition that there is no life up there and maybe some of them are more superior to us.

Rick: Certainly.

Sri M: Ancient times they always talked about the devas coming and going in so on. So maybe at some period it has been cut off, now it is very rare.

Rick: That leads us right into the next story. You have a chapter called "The Fireball from the Sky". Can we talk about that one?

Sri M: Sure. Why not?

(Laughter) I have nothing to hide. The only thing is people might think I am not okay here.

Rick: They might, but so what?

Sri M: This thing about the fireball is also something which I saw when I was neither sleeping nor dreaming nor in any kind of –anyway I hardly ever took any narcotics or anything like that.

Rick Archer: Right right...

Sri M: Except when I went to the Naga Sadhus for a short period and stayed with them; Babaji said find out, go. So I was perfectly okay. I had a meal and I was sleeping when this happened. It was like if you go to the Arundhati cave, if you have been to Rishikesh, you know there is Vashistha cave, it is about 22 km from Rishikesh towards Badrinath. If you go down from Vashistha cave then you come to the Ganga, the river, then you walk along and then up there is a little cave, not more than 2-3 people can stay there. It is called the Arundhati cave. Now, I was sleeping in the last part of it inside and Babaji never slept, I have never seen him sleep. The only thing I have seen him sometimes he would lean and sit, that's all, and he always had a dhuni, fire.

Rick: I should add that he never wore anything more than a cloth around his waist even when you were hiking up 18,000 feet in the snow.

Sri M: And barefoot...

Rick: And barefoot, yeah...

Sri M: Barefoot, even in Gomukh, the Gangotri glazier. Anyway, you know I heard kind of a thunder, like a distant thunder, so I woke up. I didn't get up. I was watching. From the cave, first comes the river, the cave is up here and the other side you have a horizon with lot of trees. So from there I saw something coming. It looked to me like a moon, like a moon which has become slightly large, and it came. And there was this light kind of thunder kind of sound coming and it came straight down and sat near the fire which Babaji had and when it sat, there was a thunderclap, very loud. When it came near, I found out that it was a sphere, almost big enough for me to sit for instance.

Rick: Big sphere...

Sri M: It was a big sphere, and then it opened. By that time, I was really very-very scared, so then it opened and that made me even more scared because inside I saw some kind of a bluish colored serpent, like a snake. It was as if the snake was made of blue glass, deep blue glass, but it was a live thing and there was something going on between that and Babaji, because it seemed to be some sort of a conversation. I could not grasp anything.

Rick: They were hissing.

Sri M: They were kind of hissing and making noises and I was so scared for sometime I thought maybe I have finally become deranged.
(Laughter)

Seriously, but I thought it cannot be, I can see it. So Babaji said, come here. So I went near him and held onto him because I did not know what was happening. Then he said, bow down, so I bowed down, and I think the snake put its head on my head for sometime and then I got up and it got in and it vanished. So what do you make of it. I mean I could not make anything out of it at that point. Later on I asked Babaji and he gave me a fairly long description about the Naga Loka and how there are many worlds and this is the snake world and the one who came was Nagaraj who is the prince of the Naga World. So I said, but why did he come here to you? He said that there was some problem in the Naga Loka, something was going on. He came to ask my advice on how to sort it. So I said Babaji you are an earth person, you live on this earth and somebody comes from Naga Loka to solve the problem to ask your advice, is this possible? He said, you know, there are in this world people with human bodies who are more evolved than all the nagas in the Naga Loka. Beyond that I do not know a thing.

Rick: I once heard a story that I did not know what to make of it. I thought might be somebody made up a story or not, but it was a story about when Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, I used to be a student of his where he first opened his Ashram in Rishikesh, and someone came into the room and saw him and Tat Wale Baba, whom you know, talking to a large snake and apparently the discussion was about making some agreement whereby the cobras and the snakes in the area would never bite any of the ashramites and apparently that never happened, nobody ever got bitten by a snake. It was one of those far-out stories, I thought well, who knows, I don't know.

Sri M: Well, I would say it is possible. It is possible, because I also know that there are lot of cobras in Rishikesh, apart from these serious scorpions there are also lots of cobras and there are black cobras, there used to be, I don't know how much now. And to live in that place where Mahesh Yogi built his cave would have been difficult if there was not some kind of an agreement between the snake, because that place was very well known for this. It is actually the way to Neelkanth. From behind, you go right up and you can reach Neelkanth.

Rick: What is Neelkanth?

Sri M: Neelkanth is a Shiva Temple on top of the hill, Neelkanth, and it is right behind that. You go where the cave used to be, cut across, and then you keep climbing and you come to Neelkanth after an hour or hour and a half, and it is famous because Neelkanth again is Shiva and snakes, the cobras, so that area is a cobra invested area and half way to Neelkanth there is a cave called Mauni Baba's Cave which has three underground caves. If you do not know, they would not show you, but once you go in there then there is one down and there is one down, there are three, and that place also used to be swarming with cobras, the hooded serpent. So I tend to believe rather than disbelieve the story about this.

Rick: So there are about four questions that have come in that I want to ask you. I am going to start asking you pretty soon from people who are watching live, but I thought it might be nice for you to tell us the story of when you finally did meet Sri Guru Babaji.

Sri M: Twice.

Rick: Twice.

Sri M: One was again the same place which we were discussing just now, the road behind the caves, which goes to Neelkanth. It happened like Babaji and I, Maheshwarnath Babaji, we were having a discussion on teaching of Kriya Yoga. So Babaji gave me lot of conditions for teaching Kriya. Looking at the conditions, I said Babaji I don't think we can ever teach Kriya to anybody with this condition, its not possible. He said one has to be a celibate. I said, look, there are many householders, people who are married, they would like to have Kriya, you cannot say...I said, what about Lahiri Mahasaya? He said, "oh that's a different story". So okay, anyway, we were having various discussions on this, and then we were walking along the Ganga and came to that quiet spot where it turns and then I saw somebody coming, difficult to describe; I have never seen anybody like that, maybe in my past, but not in this life. Very beautiful-looking person with long hair and again bare bodied just like Babaji with only a white cloth and barefoot. As soon as he appeared, Babaji prostrated before him. Now, I have never seen Babaji prostrate before anybody, never. I have seen people touching his feet; I have never seen him do it. So I said this must be his Guru and then it stuck me; his Guru is Babaji, so I also prostrated myself, so he lifted me up. I can never forget the touch. It was completely out of this world, and he put his hand on my shoulders and he told Babaji, maybe you should listen to the young man; cut down these requirements. (Laughter)

And then he just abruptly took his hands off and walked away, and I wanted to run behind him and follow him, you know. Babaji held me by my hand and said, "You cannot find him. Its over. Finished. Leave it". So I saw him turning the corner and I could not see what happened afterwards.

That was one instance when I saw him for the first time in this life. And the second was when Maheshwarnath Babaji attained Samadhi, Mahasamadhi, when he was passing away. Again, something like what I saw in the Arundhati Cave came, this time it was larger.

Rick: In other words, a glowing sphere.

Sri M: And from inside Babaji stepped out and along with him a young man stepped out, who looked very handsome. Babaji said that this is Nagaraj. I said, but I saw him in the Arundhati cave, it was like a snake. He said, this is his form this way and that way, both ways.

So he came because he wanted me to take over some of the aspects of Maheshwarnath Babaji into myself for the work. So he put my hand onto Maheshwarnath Babaji's hand and he put his hand on top of that and held it for a while, and then I actually felt something coming up then he released it and he said to Babaji, yes now you can go.

Rick: So in other words there was like a download or a transmission from him to you.

Sri M: There was something happening, yes (Laughter) there was a download and I became completely mad. I mean I don't know how to put this...

Rick: Mad with bliss or mad with....?:

Sri M: Everything changed. I felt completely different. It was as if some part of Babaji has also got into me. I won't say possessed. It is not like that. So then they went off and Babaji attained Samadhi. Very moving thing was that he did nothing but just turned around all four directions, sat down, breathed hard, and gone. So I had to fill it up. I wanted at least a stone to be put there, I asked him beforehand at least to identify the place and he said, no. So I know the place even now, but you can't locate where it is exactly. It is near Mauni Baba's cave. When I go the Himalayas and take people with me, we usually sit around the place but exact location nobody knows.

Rick: Do you have any idea physically how old your Guru was? I mean I know he was very old and did not look at. He looked like he was about 30, but did you ever get an idea?

Sri M: Yes, this much is clear that he said he was a young man when he met Sri Guru Babaji and that he was there when Shyama Charan Lahiri went to meet Sri Guru Babaji in the cave, so that is 100 years and now another 35 years-40 years. So I think easily he could have been, from my understanding, about 150 years or so old, but he looked like 30-35 years, quite young, and he hardly ate anything. He would drink water also very less and I somehow felt that he did not need food, but he just ate sometimes when people offered him. It seemed like that.

Rick: Nice. I find all this very inspiring and interesting. Some people might accuse me or us or anybody who finds this interesting of just being sort of fascinated with flashy stuff which does not have concrete relevance to once personal awakening but I think, in my opinion, it does, because I think as we have said earlier the range of possibilities and the extent of potential that dwells within us is really vast and if we dumb it down to say well it is just this or it is just that or you know you are already enlightened or whatever then we are doing ourselves a disservice, which is not to say as you said earlier that people should get caught up in all kinds of fanciful imaginary things that is not going to help them, but there should be a respect for the possibility that there is a vast range of potential unfoldment and that there have been great beings and are great beings now who are living that way.

Sri M: If that much is understood then I think we have gone a long way.

Rick: Yeah.

Sri M: I always tell people you don't have to believe the stories, okay fine, but there are many other chapters which don't have these stories, so don't neglect them, go through them.

Rick: Yeah.

Sri M: Yeah, and the other thing is as long as you understand that there are things which are beyond once understanding as of now then my job is done. I mean at least if the mind is open to say there are other possibilities, it is good enough.

Rick. And then they have a thing called beginner's mind. I think one way of interpreting that is you know one should have, Amma always says this that one should always have the attitude of a beginner, which is not to say that you haven't made progress but that if one just sort of keeps humility and an open mind.

Who was it – you were telling the story about Confucius or somebody who was pouring tea for someone and he just kept pouring and pouring and it kept spilling over. Go ahead and finish the story....

Sri M: Yes, the Zen Master. It is about a very learned professor who was so full, who gave lectures on maybe even Zen, who went to a Zen master and wanted to learn Zen and experience Satori. So he made tea for him and started pouring the tea and the cup was overflowing then the professor said, "Sir, the cup is overflowing." The Zen Master, "So how can I give you Zen; your cup is overflowing". So sometimes by our attitude we shut the door to understand, attitude you know. So all I am saying is suspend your judgment. It does not matter, don't accept it, don't reject it. Suspend your judgment and say there may be other things which we do not know or there may be other things which can be known through modes which we do not follow. There may be other modes of finding them out. So this much if is there I think my purpose is served. In fact, people should do serious research on these matters. Even the scientist should start looking at it, especially the neurologist and the psych. They should start looking at these. I am sure they have kind of started this on. That brings me to - I am writing another book now, this is not the exact title, but the subject matter is the neurological basis of mystical experience or spiritual experience.

Rick: Great...

Sri M: What is the connection between the brain and these experiences. I am working; I have done about three chapters. I have them with me, but I don't think... I put it away somewhere.

Rick: That's okay.

Sri M: So I am working on that. So we have come to the fourth chapter, just have been working on it today, it is interesting. It is called Avadhutas. You know you must have heard about Avadhutas.

Rick: Sure.

Sri M: Those crazy people...

Rick: The naked sadhus...

Sri M: And completely crazy people, who one would think have gone off the rocker. I think in this country they would be inside, asylum. And they are extraordinary people. Something has happened to their brain, but you cannot say that it is negative.

Rick: Yes. I was thinking about this. This interests me. And this whole idea of the neurophysiology of enlightenment really interests me. In fact, I can introduce you, if you like, to a researcher who has been studying it for decades, very sophisticated EEG research and I can put you in touch with him, he might like to study you.

Sri M: I would be happy if you can do that.

Rick: I will do that.

Sri M: Because I need to. I am working on this book and I am trying to get as many neurologists interested in it.

Rick: I will definitely put you in touch. His name is Dr. Fred Travis, and he lives here in my town. He has been doing this EEG research for a decade.

Sri M: Where is this? Where does he stay?

Rick Archer: Iowa. Fairfield, Iowa.

Sri M: Iowa, okay.

Rick: The thing about Avadhutas. Do you think, in your opinion, are they in a very high state of consciousness and yet some of the circuitry has been fried and so they behave so strangely or do you think that their behavior and the way they are is a completely legitimate expression for them of higher consciousness and is just part of the variety of life that there should be these sorts of strange expressions.

Sri M: I think these people have broken into this suddenly. You know, not step-by-step.

Rick: Without the proper integration.

Sri M: They have just broken into it, and they have come across something so extraordinary that the ordinary brain is not able to come to terms with it completely. However, since they have touched that energy, it is possible that they might be able to bring it about in other people, not deliberately, but for the fact that they are dynamos, so you touch a wire and get something out of it, but none of these people we know of who did any teaching in this kind of step-by-step way and instructed people or had disciples, no, but people who have been following other disciplines when they go and sit with them they do get something out of them. So I feel that they burst upon the truth so suddenly I don't know for what reason, but it kind of shocked some parts of their system and they are not integrated with it.

Rick: Yeah. So theoretically if there could be people who appeared very normal and could be running a business or raising a family or something who could actually be in as high if not higher a state than some of these Avadhutas, but it was integrated, it was balanced.

Sri M: Yes...integrated...I would almost agree with what you said that somewhere some circuit has been.... (laughter) because these energies are tremendous. Even I feel sometimes that little bit somewhere my circuit might have gotten.... (laughter)

Rick: Oh! you know on this note, several people contact me from time to time and lately I have been corresponding with a young woman in Spain who may be listening to this interview who is going through extreme Kundalini emergency or so she interprets it and it sounds like that's what it is to the point where she is paralyzed for many hours a day going through all kind of contortions. She said she feels this volcanic energy trying to rise up in her system and just it is stuck. It is not moving. Her life is just a total mess. It is kind of like, maybe, and I have read Gopi Krishna's book, but I understand he went through a lot of similar stuff. So are you ever in contact with such people. Do you have ways of helping people who are going through what we might call a spiritual emergency like that?

Sri M: I can say that only case by case. I can't make a general statement on this, but I have met people sometimes. Because when I go to Breitenbush, we have workshops in Breitenbush.

Page 29

Rick: Where is that?

Sri M: Oregon, its near the cascades, there is a retreat center called Breitenbush Hot Springs. Ram Dass used to go there before. You know Ram Dass...Hawaii.

Rick: Sure. Neem Karoli Baba's disciple.

Sri M: Yeah. So I go there for the last 11 years. Every year I have been doing a retreat there. I just came back from there. So I haven't met too many, but a couple of people who have had this problem.

Rick: Really bad?

Sri M: One was quite bad and I think she has now got adjusted to normal. So I don't have a technique to do that, but it is a person-to-person thing, so maybe if you meet this person, it is possible that something could be worked out. I don't know for sure, but it depends on the individual.

Rick: My sense is that it would be good if somehow some kind of clinic or some kind – there are some people who specialize in Kundalini care. There is a lady named Joan Shivarpita Harrigan, who has a Kundalini Care Clinic in Tennessee whom I have interviewed, but apparently she does not take cases where people are in spiritual emergency. She just takes cases where people are doing okay and they want to just redirect, but there are these cases and doctors don't know how to deal with it.

Sri M: They don't know, because it is something to do with centers of the brain which have not been explored.

Rick: And doctors are just going to give drugs and that is not going to help it. So hopefully as we grow as a culture, as a society, we will understand this better and give relief to such people.

Sri M: I think we need centers like this can come.

Rick: I am going to ask you bunch of questions. People have been sending in nice questions. I don't want to ignore them. And so we will jump around a little bit, because the questions are on different topics. Here in one from Srinivasan in Chennai.

He asks - Arjuna continues to fight a war despite self-realization because his swadharma is to be a warrior. This is a nuance often missed in the spiritual world which advances the narrow idea of an enlightened individual only existing as a social worker or a compassionate Guru. Could you elaborate on the concept of swadharma and the means to discover our personal swadharma as well as that of others?

Sri M: Swadharma is a very loaded word, talking to Mr. Srinivasan, you know swadharma people interpret it as doing once duties and so on. I think there is only one swadharma. Swadharma is dharma for oneself, one's own dharma. One important swadharma is to truly find yourself first, who you are, where you are, what you are, what is your essential being. To figure that out would be your swadharma. Because unless you figure out who you are or where you stand, what can you do to somebody else. You might be thinking you are helping somebody but you actually might be taking him to distraction. So when I say swadharma, while it is a good idea to work on and to help others and to be compassionate and so on, swadharma actually is to find out who you really are, what is your source and then having done that to act from that plane, from that point.

Rick: Yeah, which is just what Krishna said in the Gita, he said "Established in yoga perform action".

Sri M: Yes, now, that action would be action without leaving any blot on yourself, where the action would be purely from a completely altruistic point of view, nothing to do for yourself, but for that I think one has to first discover one's own dharma. And to understand one's own dharma one has to understand oneself first.

Rick: Yeah.

Sri M: So I think that is the first step to do.

Rick: And you might actually be a warrior. You might not be a social worker, you might have a role to play that does not look very ahimsa, you know, but is actually a role...

Sri M: Ahimsa is more to do with your mind state than with anything else. You can be a completely nonviolent guy outwardly and be so violent inside.

Rick: Or vice versa maybe.

Sri M: Vice versa also...you could look like quite a passive and a peace-loving guy, but you might be filled with lot of violence, this is also possible, it could be the other way too. So I am saying first find out about swa. Swa means self, and then from that start working out.

Rick: Yeah, seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all else should be added. Here is a question from Paul in Asheville, North Carolina. "Sri M says it requires a great deal of hard work. In practical terms, what work does Sri M recommend on a daily basis for those seeking self-realization.?"

Sri M: One has to set apart a certain period of your day for your spiritual practice. Now this should be inviolable, and it is hard work to do that, even to think that way. So when you say, this particular time in the day I am going to do my spiritual practices, stick to that. That is the first thing I would ask people to do. Because it is very easy to get this illusion, all I know so I can throughout the day be there and there at the same time and so on...but it is very fuzzy, you know, it is not clear-cut. So it is good to have a period set up when you say this time I will only do my spiritual practice. Now that practice may be different for different people. So I think that is the first step, and that is not easy, that is hard work. When I say hard work that's one of the things I mean and that when everybody is going on in one direction, somebody turns around and is swimming against the stream, it is hard work. You may not be appreciated. People may criticize you, if not openly, at least they would say what is wrong with this guy. So if you can put up with all that and still continue with your spiritual practice that is what I mean by daily hard work, and it has to be, there are no shortcuts.

Rick: When I first learnt to meditate when I was a teenager, basically I had to drop all my friends, because my friends were just taking drugs and all and I just did not want to hang around with them anymore and eventually I got new friends. There is an old Bengali saying which is "if no one comes on your call then go ahead alone".

Sri M: Absolutely. You can't...in this field. In this field, you cannot depend upon public opinion – one. That is why I say it is hard work. And the other is that as you said is so relevant that people drop off. People who think in one way would definitely drop off because you are thinking in a different way and sometimes you lose what you might have thought were your great friends and old friends. Its inevitable. You have a new set of friends.

Rick: You know but when you use the phrase hard work, I will bet you, well you have done a lot of arduous things, but I bet you, most of the time when you have sat to meditate it has been blissful, it is not like you think to yourself, oh I have got to go... meditate...it such a hard work... It is more like oh boy, I am looking forward to this, because it is so enjoyable.

Sri M: In the beginning, no, in the beginning it is difficult. In the beginning when you start it off, you have to bring your mind which is normally distracted, so that is difficult, but once you start and once you kind of brought your mind back, you are no more a complete extrovert, but you can introvert yourself. And then as you become more perfect you can introvert yourself at the press of a button kind of. Then it is not so difficult.

Rick: Aha...Here is a question from Sagar in Toronto, Canada, which relates to what you are just saying. He says, "I keep moving between two states; one where I am not there, just presence, but then the mind comes up with stream of thought and there is a sense of identification with it. Would you please address this type of experience?"

Sri M: Yes, this happens to many people who meditate. There are times when you are just aware and not involved and there are times when your mind gets involved. So in the yogic philosophy itself, the mind, the chitta, as it is called, is full of thoughts and distractions. So it is in the nature of the chitta to be full of thoughts and distractions. Now, the witness, which is a rare of it is not the chitta but the purusha, the self. So somewhere along the line you should sit continuously with the awareness that what is aware of the distractions is not the chitta, but the purusha, so much so that after a while you are no longer associated with the distraction. The distraction is there, it is the nature of the mind, but you are not associated with it anyway when you realize that you are the witness to it and not the one that is involved in it. So it has to come by and by.

Rick: It gets more stabilized over time, right?

Sri M: Stabilized and deeper...

Rick: Right, right...

Sri M: Lets put it that way. So it comes through constantly trying. First of all, it is not as if you are trying to make the chitta totally silent. It is like you are understanding that the chitta by its very nature has vrittis.

Rick: Fluctuations...

Sri M: Fluctuations, but you are not that.... you are aware of it, but you are not that. It is like now you can have lot of fluctuations of electricity, sound, weather, everything, but I am not part of it, I am watching it. So when this is stabilized, the wonderful thing is when this is stabilized the chitta also becomes silent.

Rick: Now there is a subtle point here, which is that it is a description prescription kind of issue where people describe the state of being a witness and just sort of watching the activities of the mind and that could be description of the way one naturally functions at a certain state, but it could also be either offered as or mistaken to be a prescription where you are telling people, watch your mind, try to be the witness, while you are doing other things try to maintain presence, are you advocating that or would you consider that would divide the mind.

Sri M: I think that would divide the mind. It is not prescription. I mean I am not saying there is a method. I am only saying that while this is happening try and disassociate yourself from it; I mean just be silent.

Rick: Well what I am a little bit cautious is that people have gotten themselves into dissociative states, you know they have gotten disintegrated, and people lose jobs, lose relationships, they become kind of impractical in the world when they approach this and what I would consider to be a mistaken way, not quite what the original teachings were intending.

Sri M: Yeah, you are right. While we certainly require periods of isolation in this practice, isolation is not a prescription for your life. You do require periods of isolation, but when you come out of the isolation you are not cutoff from the world, you are integrated with it, you don't come out with the feeling that this is different and I am different. No, no, this is not what I am talking about, please. In fact, once you are stabilized in your inner self it becomes much easier to function in this world.

Rick: Yeah. Naturally...

Sri M: Because the mind is calm. It does not get agitated. It does what it has to do quietly, and there is no distraction and therefore when you want to do something, you know how to put your complete attention on it.

Rick: Yes, and that is an important phrase, complete attention. If you are flying in an airplane you would not want your pilot to be sort of putting half his attention on flying the airplane and the other half on, you know, oh! I am only the witness...

Sri M: Exactly. In fact, I keep telling people the description of yoga, the eight limb yoga, one of the limbs is pratyahara, which is like yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara. So pratyahara, some people say it is withdrawal of the senses. I say, look this is a wrong translation of pratyahara. Pratyahara is that, as you said, when the pilot is sitting in the cockpit and he is flying, he is only flying, he is not thinking of meditation. That he can do it one-pointedly without distraction by itself is meditation.

Rick: Yeah, hopefully he is not thinking about what he had for dinner last night or where he is going to go on vacation, he is focussed on flying.

Sri M: So that is meditation. It is not as if you should sit there and meditate on the Buddha, but when you are sitting down and meditating on your Buddha – When I mean Buddha I am talking about Bodha, inner consciousness, when you are doing that then you are not flying in an airplane, you are not thinking tomorrow which is my flight. This is what I mean.

Rick: Good. Here is a question from Elizabeth in Colorado. She asks. "Is the final enlightenment or awakening something that happens within time or does it transcend time?"

I think I will just add to her question. Some people say if you think that enlightenment is something that is going to happen to you sometime in the future then you will be always chasing it like a donkey chasing a dangling carrot and then in fact the only time enlightenment ever happens is now. What would you say to that?

Sri M: She also asked about time span, you know whether it is in time.

Rick: Yeah, is it time or does it transcend time.

Sri M: Yes, when the experience actually happens it transcends time, but it is not as if it is there and you are going towards it. The Upanishads have beautiful description of the truth. It says, “tad dure tad vad antike” which means it is far and yet so near. If you look at it in an ordinary time pattern it is far, but if you look at it from the inner point of view it is right here. So it is not as if it is a linear progress from here to there. Here is a situation where it is everywhere and here and then where are you traveling, where do you go? You sit. So it is more to do with not grasping, trying to grasp and when all grasping ceases, perhaps it is right here. So you can’t say it is going to come. When you say, it is going to come, you are actually putting it away.

Rick: Yeah, it is kind of a conundrum in a way, because I mean if we say okay it is right here now then by that token everybody in the world is enlightened and in some respect perhaps they are, but it is not a living reality for them, and it will become a living reality for them, as far as I can say, sometime in the future and yet it is right here and yet they don’t see it. Perhaps, that’s the best way to put it.

Sri M: Yeah that’s why it is a conundrum. That’s why they say it is far and yet so near. Because there is no other way that our so-called limited brain can grasp this concept. There is nothing more.

Rick: Isn’t there some saying in the Bible or some place, maybe it is in the vague ledger - The truth is spread all around, but man do not see it, some such phrase, you know that, have you heard that one?

Sri M: From the bible, I haven’t seen this.

Rick Archer: I forget.

Sri M: There is a verse in the Quran which says, “wherever you turn your face, there I am”. There is a phrase like that which would be completely contradictory because then you have to pray turning your face towards the Macca, so....

Anyway, the answer to the question which this lady asked just now is that while from our ordinary point of view we are still here and not got enlightened therefore it is far in time; however, when we understand that enlightenment is not a thing to be pursued into future but it is understood now then it touches the timeless factor. And if it is happened it is certainly timeless.

Rick: Okay, good. This next question from Mark Peters in Santa Clara, California, I think might possibly relate to the walk that you took from Southern to Northern India; if not you can answer the question anyway. But do you feel that spiritual awakening has a practical value for world problems. For instance, if enough people were to become spiritually awakened could it help to solve the problem of global warming and so on or do you feel that the fate of the planet and human life upon it is ultimately uncorrelated with deepening of consciousness?

Sri M: No. I completely understand that if we are spiritually awakened, whatever that means, if we are then in our actions it certainly reflects, and our actions will certainly be to integrate rather than to disintegrate. So bringing peace and not war, to be environmentally conscious and see that all living beings are as important as we are including the plants which are living beings; I think these are all expressions of one's spiritual understanding. So I personally believe that if more people become spiritual, in the real sense of the term then it becomes a solution to the world's problem. Please, let me clarify, I am not saying if we all sit together and meditate on peace we are going to get peace, no, I mean that's a good thing to do, it can change minds, but person with a spiritual understanding and realization, his actions would always reflect integrity and integration rather than disintegration; when I say disintegration, in the bad sense of the term.

Rick: Yes.

Sri M: So therefore my walk – I didn't have an agenda except that I want people to come, meet and talk to me and see how I think about this whole situation of life and so we went from village to village, city to city, we met all kinds of people, and I am convinced that we have planted at least the seeds of harmony in some way. It takes time to grow. If you plant a seed, tomorrow it does not become a big tree, it takes time, it needs to be nurtured, various factors are involved. So I think that if more and more people are spiritually inclined in the real sense of the term not to consider spiritual as being some kind of a runaway from society or you know to hide from society or an excuse for laziness or things like that not that then the mind becomes good, kind and better and it reflects on everybody else.

Rick: I hope you wore shoes on this walk, and you did not go barefoot.

Page 36

Sri M: I had shoes...(laughter...)

Rick: Good, hopefully good shoes and not just little rubber flip-flops, but...

Sri M: I did try the rubber flip-flops in the beginning but it gave me a lot of trouble, so I wore proper walking shoes.

Rick: Good.

Sri M: You know you have to be practical in these matters. These Arabs have a saying, you know, "You trust in God, but tie your camel".

Rick: I would love to have been on that walk with you. It must have been a wonderful adventure. I will go on the next one.

Sri M: Next walk...

Rick: My wife wants to know if they allow dogs on the walk...

(Laughter)

Sri M: Dogs are allowed.

Rick: No apparently not. - Oh, you said yes or no on the dogs?

Sri M: Yes.

Rick: Yes, dogs are allowed. So next time we are coming in and bringing our dogs...

Just a note on what we are just discussing, I would say and would you agree that everything we see on a global scale, world problems, health problems, economic problems, environmental problems so on and so forth are kind of just a manifestation on the more surface level of the conglomeration of human consciousness. Seven billion people, each of them having a certain makeup, certain state of mind, certain state of consciousness and taken collectively while in their own individual life they produce an influence and you could see that in their family for instance but then in the community, in the nation, in the world, all the quality of life that we see on the surface is just a reflection of the quality of all the consciousness of all the individuals making up the society and just as a forest which is all grey and brown might be, you know it is grey and brown because each individual tree is grey and brown and if we want the forest to be green we have to water each individual tree, so conversely if you want the whole society to really be free of all these huge problems something needs to be done to elevate the consciousness of each individual that makes up society. That is rather long-winded statement, but do you see it that way.

Sri M: I believe so. You see, when you say society, there is no society without us.

Rick: Right, we are it.

Sri M: Society is human beings, right? And also a little bit I defer on this colors. They need not be all green.

Rick: Well, it just a metaphor.

Sri M: Yeah, yeah. The whole of nature lives in its different multiplicity. Even though there is an essential unity, outward it is all multiple, in fact prakriti which is the word used in Samkhya philosophy for the earth, for the universe, prakriti. The very definition of prakriti is “prakriti is that which differentiates”. So differences are bound to be there. There is an essential unity somewhere behind. So I personally believe if human beings we who form society can change then these things can change. Reformation from outside is not going to do much. It is necessary, of course, sometimes, but you can’t hope to get the change that we seek by just social reformation; it has to come from inside.

Rick: Yeah, and along the lines what you are just saying if we were to eventually have “enlightened society” everybody would not be the same. In fact, there could even be greater variety. If you water a forest then look at the Amazon rainforest, the variety and diversity there where you have a really sort of thriving ecosystem.

Sri M: Right. So our attempt should not be to grow only lotuses or grow only roses. We should have a garden where everything is and everything grows equally well. The thing is you cannot turn roses into lotuses and lotuses into roses. They have their own nature, but to have a good lotus and a good rose, this is the aim.

Rick: I guess we could say if the innermost self or spirit is the ultimate nourishment, it’s the fuel that animates our life then you know if that fuel starts to be more abundant each life is going to flourish in its diversity as well as be more harmonious.

Sri M: Absolutely...without clashing.

Rick: Yeah, without clashing, right.

Here is a question from someone you probably know, its Priyam in Madanapalle, your town in India.

Sri M: Oh, she is a dentist.

Rick: Oh she is a dentist? Okay. Well, this question has nothing to do with dentistry. She says, for someone who needs to start reading Upanishads, which would you recommend they start with? And which English translation by which author would you recommend?

And of course, you have a book commenting on several of the Upanishads, I was reading it last night.

Sri M: I think one of the best Upanishad to start with is the Kathopanishad. The Kathopanishad is a very beautiful Upanishad. It is a dialogue between the lord of death, the king of death, Yama and this young boy Nachiketa who goes there to his court. It is beautiful. He is asking him to tell him the meaning of death and what is life and so on. A very good translation. You know, there are many translations now-a-days of the Upanishads, but my recommendation would be to go back to the rather impartial simple translation of Dr. Radhakrishnan. Dr. Radhakrishnan was one of the presidents of India at one time, but he was a great scholar, and although it tends a little more towards Advaita Vedanta of Shankara because he was more of a Shankarite, it does not matter. Because he did not belong to a certain cult or anything, it is absolutely nondenominational, its clear, and it is very simply written.

Rick: How do you spell that?

Sri M: Kathopanishad, I think that's a very good start and the next would be the Isavasya Upanishad, because it is the smallest of the Upanishad.

Rick: And you did commentary on that one? Didn't you?

Sri M: I have. I love it. It is beautiful.

Rick: Is that the one purnamadah purnamidam is in?

Sri M: Purnamadah purnamidam is the beginning of the shloka before you start the Upanishad.

Rick: Right. Oh! all of them or just that particular one?

Sri M: Different Upanishads have different...they are called the shantipaaths, the first, beginning, and because purnamadah talks about everything being complete and Isavasya Upanishad talks about the all pervading reality. So it links it together.

Rick: Beautiful. Let me see here. There are few more questions. Here is a good one. Oh, Srinivasan again, he is prolific, in Chennai....

He says, the concept of kaivalya, how does it compare with Buddhist enlightenment ideal such as our hardship and Buddhahood.

Sri M: This is a technical question, but let me put it this way. There are different schools of thought that describe enlightenment. Kaivalya is a word which is picked up from the Yoga Sutras; it is from Samkhya and Yoga Darshan. Kaivalya simply means complete pure awareness without anything else, kaivalya.

Rick: Alone, does it mean alone?

Sri M: Alone. When you realize that you are alone there is nothing else but you, not in the sense of Srinivas or M but you in your true essence of the term and that would be dangerous to think that only M exist.

Rick: Sort of one without a second kind of a thing.

Sri M: So when this happens...this is called kaivalya. Now the Vedantic term used is Moksha. Moksha also means the same, but it adds the other dimension, one more dimension, which is freedom. I personally say kaivalya is not different from freedom. Kaivalya also means to be free. When there is nothing but that. There is nothing to be entangled or conditioned by, and moksha means freedom from rebirth, freedom from conditioning and being free forever, I mean this is moksha.

Okay, now when the Buddhist says Nirvana, not only the Buddhist even the Jains call it Nirvana, the ultimate state. You know there is somewhere along the line a misunderstanding that nirvana actually means that everything is gone, like the blowing out of the candle. I have had several discussions with Buddhist monks, unknown, known, including His Holiness Dalai Lama and what has emerged from my understanding that Nirvana means basically snuffing out of all the agitating, distracting and negative impulses from the mind. Not total annihilation. There is a wrong idea, which is why people say is this the same as that. It is not annihilation, it is annihilation of all that holds you down, all that is heavy and dark and negative, like your greed, your lust, when that is clean then the mind attains to a state which is called Nirvana.

Rick: Did Dalai Lama agree with that when you offered that?

Sri M: Yes. I didn't offer it. You see it started like this. In fact, I thought he must be busy, because so many people were waiting for him. He said, "sit, don't worry". So the thing was about Upanishad, the Kena Upanishad which comes from the Samaveda says, "yan manasa na manute yenhur mano matam."

That means that which even the mind cannot reach, but because of which the mind has its capacity to think, that alone is the truth, nothing that you worship. This is the Kena Upanishad. So the Dalai Lama His Holiness stopped me. He said, just a minute, if the mind also cannot reach it then what have we to do with it. We have nothing to do with it. If even the mind cannot reach it, so what do we do, nothing. So I said what it means is the ordinary mind cannot reach it. He said, yeah that is right – ordinary mind. So what kind of a mind can reach it? Mind that is clear of its temptations, its lust, its anger, its greed, such a mind can understand it, right? Yes, he said that is Nirvana. This is how the conversation came.

Rick: I would also say perhaps that you know this – Yogas chitta-vritti-nirodhah that when the mind reaches that – it is like getting out of a boat, you know you have reached the shore, so the boat has served its purpose. The mind is transcended at least momentarily or that is beyond the active mind. It is more fundamental than the active mind.

Sri M: So therefore when people ask this question, like Mr. Srinivas, somewhere along the line the idea is well, Buddhism does not believe in creator god, in Ishwara, so can it be the same nirvana as for instance moksha, but I would say that in all these there is no mention of creator god at all including Samkhya. Yoga believes of course, the theory of yoga, but the state of kaivalya, moksha and nirvana by definition in essence are the same.

Rick: It seems to me that all these different religion and schools of thought and so on including the systems of Indian Philosophy; it is not like they are competing or combating one another, its more like they just have different angles on the truth and different specialties. I mean one of them – the specialty is to focus on this and not the other things because those things are taken care of and there may seem to be contradictions between them, but in larger picture they are all just pieces of a larger puzzle like the blind man feeling the elephant, you know.

Sri M: Yes and that story of the elephant actually comes from ancient Jain sources, which was elaborated upon and made a fable story by Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmi in his Masnavi. So it comes from Jain sources. The source is not important; the thing is more important. Now, you know the Jains have something which is so interesting, it is called Anekavada, Anekantvada that means something could be what I think, it could also be what somebody else thinks.

Rick: It is good attitude.

Sri M: Yeah, yeah. Anekantvada it is called, which means, “oh well, it may be this; it may be that”. And the elephant story comes from that tradition.

Rick: Right.

Sri M: Because ultimately the whole nobody knows.

Rick: And both are right, you know, even though they are experiencing something completely different and they could argue with each other that you are wrong, you are wrong. No, they are actually both right. It is just part of the larger picture.

Sri M: It is like Vedanta Vada they call it anekantvada. That means well, that may be what you think, okay you are right, but maybe somebody – that may be right too.

Rick: Yeah. So you are traveling around. People will be watching this for years, but right now you are in the United States, and you are in the West Coast and you will be going to Dallas pretty soon and then Long Island, and you have a website satsang-foundation.org is it? Or .com?

Sri M: Yes, satsang-foundation.org.

Rick: Satsang-foundation.org, which I will be linking to from BatGap and people can check out your schedule and your various activities there and everything. Is there something set up whereby somebody who is interested wherever they live can learn something to practice as a spiritual practice. For instance, someone asked another Srinivasan from a different place in India, must be a common name, Gurgaon, India, asks, Kriya yoga - are you teaching what Yogananda taught, you have used the word Kriya. Do you have a practice that you advocate or that people can learn in order to get into the routine of a daily practice?

Sri M: I do, but it cannot be done...

Rick: Remotely...

Sri M: Yeah.

Rick: Right.

Sri M: People come and meet me and then they sit down and discuss. The Kriya which I teach has come from the same tradition as Yogananda Paramahansa. There is no doubt about that, because Yogananda Paramahansa was taught by Yukteswar Maharaj who was Lahiri Mahasaya's disciple, who was Babaji's disciple, one of the prominent disciples in this time. So it is the same tradition. Therefore, the Kriya yoga practice, the basic Kriya yoga practice is the same. It cannot be different. I have met people. I have talked to the SRF and the YSS people and it is the same; however, there are certain practices which are not commonly taught to everybody. It depends on the teacher and the student. So when you are in touch with the student you might feel that this can be added or that can be subtracted.

Now, there are such elements which may be little different but the basic theory of the Kriya Yoga which means that the energies in your body have to be concentrated and your awareness has to travel from your sushumna nadi which is in the center from Muladhara to Sahasrara along with the Prana, now this is common to both Yogananda's teaching and our teachings. The technique to do that may defer here and there a little bit depending on, you know....

Rick: Does it involve pranayama?

Sri M: It does...It is very-very closely linked to Pranayam.

Rick: And some mantra meditation or....

Sri M: It has some bijaksharas to be chanted along with the centers, the chakras, but there are many disciplines of similar kind.

Rick: And so let's say somebody is watching this and they are in Australia and you are not going to go to Australia and they can't travel; what would you recommend for them?

Sri M: I would say that they should start with preliminary practice, which can be given to all.

Rick: And how do they get that?

Sri M: It does not cause any harm because you are not dealing with anything directly with energies. So simple method which in some traditions also they don't teach unless you are initiated, but I think we have evolved and it is time to come out, you know, and not keep things in the dark and hide it somewhere and make it look so mysterious. So Babaji has given me permission to give the first part. We call it the Hamsa technique. Well, the Bengali say, Haunsa, but it is Hamsa. It is basically to do first the Guru Mantra, which is to place your hand - now-a-days I have been broadcasting the Guru Mantra. In our tradition, the Guru Mantra, Sri Guru Babaji is considered to be the Guru. So the mantra applicable to him, we practice by visualizing a white lotus in the heart center here, Anahat, inside and two little feet on that, not feet, footwear, padukas we call it, footwear on that and consider them to be Sri Guru Babaji's Padukas, and we hold it with our hands and chant, "Om Hrim Sri Gurubhyo Namah". "Om Hrim Sri Gurubhyo Namah", quietly, there is no counting, 5 minutes-10 minutes depending upon your time and we believe that if that is done you are kind of establishing a link with Sri Guru Babaji.

Rick: Do you say that out loud or mentally?

Sri M: Mentally. Let me make it clear which does not mean, I have to make it very clear that when you start doing it Babaji is going to come and stand near your bedroom that is not what it means. You know people have various.... So the link is established and when it is established we believe that somehow or the other the Kriya will come your way, because it comes from that source. Okay, so after doing the Guru Mantra then we do the Hamsa. Now, Hamsa is to sit quietly in any comfortable posture with your head and spine erect, cross-legged if possible and then hands can be held this way (chin mudra) or just like this or on the knees, it doesn't matter. Then instead of controlling your breath you just watch your breath passively as it goes in and out and when the breathing goes in which means when you inhale, in your mind you chant the sound "Hum". And when you exhale, you chant the sound of "Sau". So it is hum sau, hum sau. You are not controlling your breath in anyway. You are just watching your breath and when you inhale you are saying "Hum" to yourself and "Sau" when you exhale out and remain doing this for a long time watching your breath. You can hold your breath if you like, but this is not part of the technique. So just do this. Now, when you start doing it the first thing you would notice is at some point you feel like giving a deep sigh automatically, spontaneously. When the sigh happens then it is a sign that your mind is settling down and you do nothing, you don't expect anything to happen, you are not going anywhere, you are just saying Humsau in your mind watching your breath, just that with no expectations. But when you do that after doing "Om Hrim Sri Gurubhyo Namah" Guru Mantra, I have found that it works better, and then after watching Humsau for a while let go of even that and just sit quietly and just be a witness then bow down before you leave and say thank you. This is a simple thing anybody can do. It doesn't matter what denomination, you are a Buddhist or a Christian or whether you believe in god with form or without form whether you believe in this saint, it doesn't matter, anybody can do it.

Rick: And while you are doing this if you find that you are getting sleepy or your mind is wandering or something - what should you do?

Sri M: If your mind is wandering the only way is to bring it back to the Humsau...

Rick: Gently...

Sri M: Again and again, gently, and if you are feeling sleepy, the reason is one is that the mind is relaxed and relaxed mind if it cannot go into higher states of consciousness it usually goes into sleep, so you have to get up and wash your face, there is no way out, sit down and do it again.

Rick: What if you have a backlog of fatigue and maybe what you really need is a nap and then after your nap you will have a fresher experience.

Sri M: Then you should take a nap, come back and do it.

Rick Archer: Yeah...

Page 44

Sri M: Better. Better to do that.

Rick: I am glad that we are able to take the time to have you give people little something like that. Thank you so much for this conversation. I feel its such a joy to talk to you.

Sri M: Thank you very much, thank you very much, and I am glad that I am talking to you, because sometimes it is difficult to talk when people don't have the ABC, so it is easier.

Rick: Well, maybe I am up to D now...

(Laughter)

Sri M: What I mean is when you know this...

Rick: Yeah, I know. I have been doing. In fact, you and I almost share our birthday. We are both born in 1949.

Sri M: Really?

Rick: I in October and You in November.

Sri M: Okay....

Rick: So we both have birthdays coming up.

Sri M: Thank you very much then.

Rick: Thank you.

Sri M: It was very nice meeting you too.

Rick: Let me just make a couple of general concluding remarks before we disconnect. Those of you who have been watching have been watching part of an ongoing series. I have been doing every week for over six years now and if you would like to check our previous ones, go to batgap.com and there just explore the menus, you know there is an audio podcast you can sign up for, you can sign up to be notified by e-mail each time a new one is posted and variety of other things. Recently, we put a glossary of Sanskrit terms and also glossary of non-dual terms and over time we will keep developing and adding things like that people might find helpful.

So thank you for listening, watching and thank you again Sri M, it has really been a delight. Enjoy your stay in the United States.

Page 45

Sri M: Thank you.

Rick: Hope to meet you in person sometime.

Sri M: Sure. Thank you.

Rick: Namaste.

Sri M: Namaste.

-End-