

Lawrence Edwards - Batgap Interview (#378)

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 375 of them now and if you would like to check out previous ones go to batgap.com and look under the past interview menu where you will see them organized in four-five different ways. This show is made possible by the support of appreciative viewers and listeners, so if you appreciate it and feel like supporting it to any degree there is a donate button on every page of the site.

So today my guest is Lawrence Edwards, PhD. I am kind of excited about this interview. I say this pretty often, but I really enjoyed preparing for this interview. Lawrence has a wealth of experience and wisdom and going back many decades and I really enjoyed listening to his other interviews and reading his books.

I am going to read a little bio here. Lawrence is a PhD and has practiced and taught meditation for over 40 years. He is the founder and director of the The Anam Cara Meditation Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to teaching meditative practices from a variety of traditions. Mission of the The Anam Cara Foundation is to make meditation instruction available to everyone. Lawrence has offered thousands of free meditation programs at universities, hospital, churches, meditation centers, yoga centers, hospice groups, prisons and more. Dr. Edwards maintains a clinical practice in Armonk, New York, offering optimum mind training, transpersonal psychotherapy, spiritual mentoring, biofeedback, neurofeedback, hypnosis, peak performance training and meditation training. He also works with people interested in spiritual growth, dream work and Kundalini processes. He has served as a president of the Kundalini Research Network since 2006 and is recognized around the world for his wisdom and skill in working with Kundalini. Dr. Edwards has studied and practiced in the Kundalini yoga tradition, Tibetan Buddhist and Huichol Indian shamanic traditions. These rich reservoirs of wisdom have expanded and deepened the transpersonal and Jungian psychological perspectives of his professional training. His mystical experiences began as a young child and have continued throughout his life. They have been the real guiding force behind his studies and training. His profound experience of the Divine present in everyone at all times and in all places has led him to live a life of service in teaching and supporting others on their journeys into the Divine.

So, good to meet you Lawrence.

Lawrence: Pleasure to meet you Rick and your audience.

Rick: Let's see, looks like about 50 people on so far. And probably most of them know the drill; if they have a question during this interview they are welcome to post it in the form at the bottom of the page on the upcoming interviews page on batgap.com.

So, you are one of these people - as I read your book and so on I think I would like to do like a one-month interview with this guy where we just read a passage and talk about it. - read a passage and talk about it. But that will be a little difficult to do logistically and YouTube doesn't let you upload files that big so we will have to squeeze it into two hours, but you do have a wealth of experience and knowledge and I have taken a lot of notes from my reading and I think we are going to cover a lot of ground here.

Would you like to start with the experience you had during the thunderstorm when you were a child?

Lawrence: I will start anywhere you would like me to start.

Rick: Why don't you start there? It's a good beginning.

Lawrence: Alright, so just to help your audience - you have read that and it's something that I have written about in relationship to my experiences of the Divine feminine and the notion of Kundalini as one name for the Divine and the sort of the feminine face of the Divine. And one of my early experiences of that happened to be when I was about 3-4 years old, and I was probably 3 because I was still in a crib, and I woke up to this raging thunderstorm and the crashing thunder, the lightening was flashing and I looked up over the railing of my bed and there was what I thought was my mother standing over my bed looking very kindly and compassionately at me and as I looked at her and I remember little voicing Ma and she just stood there and little moments went by, few more clashes of thunder and flashes of lightening and again I said, Ma, and she just stood there and it was at that point I noticed that when the lightening flashed, she disappeared and when it was pitch-dark she was completely lit up and she was literally made of light, she was radiant, exquisite light and at that point my little mind went, wait a minute, this isn't Ma and I went - Ma - and then I screamed again - Ma - and my mother from the bedroom next door came running in and as soon as she opened the door this Lady of Light disappeared, and I started telling her about the Lady of Light and my mother was going, well, ya, ya, ya...great imagination. And it was just the storm and it was just the dream. And I knew that was no dream and talked about her literally for years. My brother and sister remember me talking about her. My mother, my father at that time; they both passed away and then fast forward to me getting very serious about yoga practices and meditation in my freshman year of college and one night I had gone to bed and in the middle of the night I woke up and there she was once again, like 15-16 years later standing at the foot my bed, just this beatific presence, the radiant Divine, and I just became absorbed in that and passed into the profound state of meditation and I have had that sense of that living presence of the Divine around me in my life and fortunately for most of my life in some way or another and have always delighted in hearing other people talk to me. I have had people who have written to me, yes, they had an experience of the Lady of Light because that's what I called her as a child.

Rick: I guess from what I have read - you associated her with Kundalini later on and I was wondering - from the traditions that you and I both come from or have studied, it is understood that there is celestial realm and there are celestial beings who reside in that

realm. It's not often some other planet, it's right here, just at a subtler level, so couldn't that have been some celestial being like maybe your guardian angel or something. I mean, why would you necessarily associate her with Kundalini.

Lawrence: Well, yes, in one level question is could that have been...it could have been...But when she told me who she was it was clear she was the Great Goddess. As those experiences evolve I made it clear that one of her forms is the form of Kundalini. That's how she is known in the yoga tradition, but this magnificent power that especially in the Shaivite tradition, we call Shakti, the universal power of consciousness that creates the entire universe including the entire universe of our individuality, the entire universe of our subtle body and the chakras, and takes then the form also of Kundalini as the specific power of revelation and transformation that takes us beyond the ordinary mind and our identity with this body and roles that it plays and everything else.

Rick: So when did she tell you who she was and what did she say exactly.

Lawrence: Well that happened right around the time that I had met Muktananda which was in 1976 and it was shortly thereafter that I wound up in the hospital and they thought I was dying of lymphosarcoma, and in the Lenox Hill Hospital I went into the state of meditation and then experienced the Lady of Light, this Divine presence, and Muktananda simultaneously by my bedside, and I had only met Muktananda once briefly like on a darshan line, a meeting line at a program up in Upstate New York, but it had a profound effect on me and was opening that connection between what that living presence of the Divine that I had experienced and what this rich language and archetype that spoke to and through the Kundalini tradition, the Shaivite tradition, the Shakti tradition. And there was not so much she made it, she spoke to me in literal words, it was making it known - these were one and the same.

Rick: Some years prior you had some vision or some cognition that you are going to die at around that age. Right?

Lawrence: Right. Yes. So when I was 12, and I used to love climbing up these big pine tree that was next to my house and going up onto the roof and I would just lay upon the roof and stare up at the sky and go into these kind of states of meditation and reverie, watch the clouds drift by and it really gave me the sense of that was the world, clouds drifting by in the sky, thoughts drifting by in the mind and I would get these just profoundly still kind of states and at one time that happened and I heard this voice, and it said very matter-of-factly you are going to die by the time you are 25. And to a 12-year-old, 25 seems like a really long-long. I had a cousin who was 24, and I already thought he was an old man, so it didn't concern me at all. But it certainly stuck in my mind and that time when I was then hospitalized at Lenox Hill Hospital I was 24 and my birthday was coming up in three months and they said I might only have a couple of months to live, and then I thought of that again and I went - oh that's what was being communicated.

Rick: But it turned out these growths you had in your chest were benign. They weren't cancerous and you lived.

Lawrence: Right.

Rick: I wonder if there was some kind of Divine intervention like you are given a second lease on life and like had you not been on the verge of dedicating your life to spirituality – I don't know this is very speculative, but they might have been malignant and you might have died. There are stories like that, you know where Shankara had a number of things like that in his life where he was going to die but he made some sort of commitment or something and it kept him alive for a number of years.

Lawrence: Well and that was my experience. When I was in Lenox Hill Hospital and they really thought I was going to die, I really turned to the Lady of Light, I mean in a tenacious way of praying to her and to Muktananda who I knew had an extraordinary power that moved through him that was very reminiscent of the Lady of Light to me, and I offered a prayer that I didn't know what was going to happen, I didn't know what would come off all this but if there is any way for their grace to carry me through that, I really would – I would dedicate my life to the Divine, to service of the Divine and it was then that I fell into that deep meditation and had the experience of their presence. And it was shortly thereafter that they changed the diagnosis and it wasn't long after that after I got out of the hospital I did leave everything, I left my fiancé, I left my job, I left family, I left everything to go serve.

Rick: Yes, That's very interesting. It's almost like an archetypal kind of thing where you are on death's door and there is some Divine intervention, you make a promise, it saves your life and then you go and fulfill that promise. There are number of stories like that in different traditions.

Lawrence: Sure.

Rick: It's cool...So we have kind of weaved the biographical stuff in-and-out as we go along. Feel free to bring up anything at anytime that comes to your mind even if I am not asking a question about it. But we have thrown the word Kundalini around a little bit here and perhaps we better zero in on a better definition. I think probably most people listening to this have some idea of Kundalini and chakras and all, and they think of the Kundalini as some energy that is coiled up at the base of the spine and is ordinarily dormant and then in some people it awakens and it works its way up through the chakras and that is probably the extent of what the majority of people understand about it who understand anything. So how would you like to elaborate on that.

Lawrence: You got a few days....?

(Laughter)

Rick: Like I said we could make this a one-month interview.

(Laughter)

Lawrence: Yes, a lot of my work I think has been trying to give voice or give some clarity to the magnificence of Kundalini. A lot of, especially the Western understanding of Kundalini is to me quite limited, and what's often a part of the root of that is much of what's communicated and has been written about Kundalini is really encoded in the language of symbol and symbol point beyond itself, but unless you understand the language of symbol and what these extraordinary archetypal images with depictions, ways of talking about sound and form, if you don't have a deep appreciation for that it becomes very concrete and it becomes very simplistic and then a lot of the depth, beauty, the meaning, the profound nature of Kundalini gets lost. And so, what's being sort of transferred into more popular kind of literature and understanding is you know the system of chakras, as you say the Kundalini coils the base of the spine, all of that is this profound symbolic language. And part of my training as a Jungian and training in symbology and work of Joseph Campbell really helped me to understand and unfold that and working with teachers who had the wisdom to communicate that in ways that you don't just get from a book and to understand that even something is seemingly concrete as – here is the coiled form at the base of the spine is already so concretized what is going on there.

Rick: Yes, a physiologist would scoff at it and they say, nonsense, there is no coiled form. We have done detailed anatomical research. There is no such thing.

Lawrence: Right. And it often picks up Kundalini sort of halfway through it's entirety of presence. So, to understand Kundalini word and being symbolized as this coiled form in this root center, the earth center, the Muladhara chakra, you first have to start with how did that even come to be and so that's why the whole nature of Kundalini can't be understood separate from understanding Shakti. Shakti meaning power, the universal power of the infinite to manifest form and to know that, the power of consciousness to know itself, both as the form and as the formless, to create all the domains and universes of form out of itself, as itself, and that's the nature of Kundalini, that is the nature of Kundalini, so the symbol in the Sahasrara the top chakra that represents that transcendent state of union. Their Shiva and Shakti are one and they are inseparable. Then you get this dynamic play and we can go through the stages of that if it is interesting and the evolution of consciousness and how it goes from this boundless infinitude into something that is finite and measurable and how does it then go through the stages the successive stages of taking on a form until you get to the most concrete form, the base form of the earth element that's what symbolized by the Muladhara chakra and there then you have concrete form symbolizing the unity of Shiva and Shakti, so that even there they are completely present, and there Shiva is the form of a Lingam and Shakti is the form of this classic ancient feminine form of the snake coiled around that. In part, what it is depicting is that even in most concrete level of reality, Shiva and Shakti are complete union and completely present. They are present there as form but if you can go beyond and look beyond even in the form you will see the formless.

Rick: So you may have said this already, but let's reiterate because we are throwing around Sanskrit terms Shiva and Shakti, and people might be having images come to mind of a guy with snake around his shoulders and a river coming out of his hair and you know blue throat so on. When you go to India and you go into Motilal Banarsidass and look at the posters, you know all this is depicted very colorfully, but what it really represents is some deep primordial reality, some force of nature that is responsible for that is kind of integral to the functioning of the universe and Shakti to the manifestation of the universe. So, let's just elaborate on that little bit so that we are not just talking Hindu mythology here that people realize we are actually talking physics and cosmology.

Lawrence: Right. And remembering Shiva, despite the interesting forms of a deity with a trident and all those things, Shiva, the word just means the auspicious one. And that one is the infinite boundless consciousness and power that isn't indicial to the universe, it is universe. And so, it comes from the tradition that is different – our Western minds are very much tuned to monotheism and this is monism. So monotheism is one God and then there is all of creation and its primarily kind of dualistic perspective. Monism is all there is the one infinite and it takes on every form that you are looking at is the infinite is the Divine. You look in mirror you are seeing the eyes of God and mouth of God and the face of God. You look at anything and what you are seeing is – is that. You are functioning as the eyes of God to know the finite nature of who you are what it is to experience the Universe from that perspective. So, when we say Shiva or Universal Consciousness that's what we are talking about and it's an artificial designation to try and separate out the Shiva from Shakti, the Universal Infinite from its power to manifest, that is already an operation of mind creating differences where difference does and exist. So, there is no time, there is no place where those things are at all separate, anymore than you can separate heat from fire or light from fire, you cannot separate Shiva from Shakti, the infinite and its power to know and to manifest that.

Rick: I remember Muktananda's favorite phrase was "God dwells within you as you". It even had it on the billboard or the sign at the ashram there in South Fallsburg; I used to go by there. In fact, I was couple 100 yards away from where you were in summer of 1976. So let's dig into this little bit more. So, what you just said is that consciousness is the sole reality (and correct me if you didn't just say this), but that the intrinsic to consciousness is its manifesting quality which we are calling Shakti here, and that through this subtle dynamics the universe appears to take form. Right? Is that correct way of summarizing?

Lawrence: Yes. Right.

Rick: Okay and in the human physiology there was a whole step-by-step thing you went through in your book at some point about the process of manifestation and how the individuality comes into form through that process, you know what I am referring to.

Lawrence: Yes, we will go into that, but part of what these traditions try to lay out is then what's the map of how you go from the infinite to the finite.

Rick: Right, that's what I am referring to.

Lawrence: And so one map would break it down into four bodies. There is the supracausal body of the infinite that is all encompassing both the transcendent and the imminent in complete union. Then there is a causal body, then there is a subtle body, then there is physical body, that's a way of understanding different levels of sort of manifestation and the consciousness as a subtle energy becoming more and more concrete until you have physical form. So that's one map.

Another map is the map of chakras. That delineates it a bit further. So instead of having sort of a three-stage process, causal, subtle, gross physical now you have chakras, also looking at different ways consciousness becomes more and more dense, more and more contracted, more and more gross until you get sort of the physical elements.

Rick: And that's not really an alternate map, that's just an elaboration on the first map. Right?

Lawrence: Right and it's important to understand, a map is never the territory. Having been a backpacker and hiker and spelunker for a time – the map is never the territory. And if you depend on the map your life will get lost, because there are a lot of things missing from maps. And so yes, it's a nice sketch of what that is, but it's part of what happens when we don't understand the symbolic nature of what that map is and also something that Piaget – I don't know if you are familiar with the developmental psychologist Piaget and his stages of development. And what are the things that his work and subsequent testing and everything that was done, research to validate those stages of cognitive development. Many people get caught and there are sort of demographic studies that talk about how much of the population progresses through those different phases and the next to the last phase is concrete operational thinking. It's concrete thinking. And that is a level of thought where it is very hard for people in that mind state and when we are younger, particularly when it's dominant to see the symbolic, because we are thinking concretely. And concrete thinking always leads to that kind of misinterpretation. It leads to fundamentalism. It's mistaking the symbol for something that's concrete; whereas a symbol is always pointing beyond itself. It's the old Zen saying, "Do not confuse the finger for the moon". So teachings, practices whatever pointing to where consciousness is – you can't take that thing as the concrete form and get involved in that. And so that's true then of also the system of chakras which is beautifully elegant in describing that and people can get involved in it in various ways and to various degrees, but if you look at it just in terms of each of the chakras is associated with an element and so when you start out with the Sahasrara, there is the infinite transcendent. Then when you get down to the Ajna chakra – well that's not exactly an element. That's where mind sort of individualized consciousness comes in and so now you have the infinite starting to contract and take on a finite form. I wouldn't say mind has the same form or properties that the body has or the computer you are looking at or whatever, it's not that defined, but it's more defined than the infinite the boundless because now its bound, now it's contracted, now it has limitations to it. And then out of that and this process of the descent of Shakti of pure consciousness through the chakras

and the creation of each level as it goes is called involution. It's sort of the involving of consciousness in the manifestation of a form. So then when you go from the Ajna chakra to the Vishuddha chakra. Now the Vishuddha chakra is the element of space, sometimes called ether, so it's more concrete than mind, but still pretty subtle. When you get to the heart chakra, now that's considered the element of air, so air has more definition, you can feel the wind, you can't feel space, so it has more definition to it, more form, it's more contacted, and out of that then it descends further and when you get to the Manipura chakra you get to fire and that's the element that seem to be represented by that level of manifestation. It contracts further, becomes in the Svadhishthana chakra – water – the element of water until finally you get to the Muladhara chakra and the element – the grossest form earth. It is important to realize you are still in the subtle body, so none of these have a physical form yet. We are still on the subtle essence of each of these planes, each of these elements that is being represented by this involution and form-assuming nature of Shakti.

Rick: Does this mean that even a disembodied soul such as between lifetimes or something would have all these chakras intact without a physical body.

Lawrence: Theoretically, yeah, they would still be in the subtle seed form in the tattwa form that as long as in a sense once you get below the causal body and this is here in a sense how that map of the causal body, the subtle body and the physical body overlays with the chakras and is also a way of talking about how does creation happen. And one thing is important to understand is: The Eastern traditions, their paradigm for looking at how creation occurs is radically different than the Western scientific materialist tradition which forms a lot of the basis of our thoughts and ways of understanding the world. Material philosophy looks for material causes to explain the subtle. So consciousness is an artifact of neurons firing. You have concrete brain cells firing and consciousness is produced. Now the Eastern tradition says, no, no, it's the other way around. The subtle creates the gross. It's consciousness that creates a body and a brain in order to manifest its qualities of consciousness and that whole process of involution of going through the chakras and understanding how it is manifesting things at different levels is that understanding of how does the subtle and the most radically subtle, the infinite, the Sahasrara that boundless energy go into becoming something as concrete as our hand or the chair that we are sitting in.

Rick: So you just mentioned that you went through all the chakras and you mentioned at that stage that you had discussed the physical body still hasn't come into the picture, so at what point and how does the physical body come into the picture and kind of become associated with these different chakras.

Lawrence: Well, there it has to do with what's coming in and where our karma, the residue of our past actions is helping to shape what's the body that we are going to take in this lifetime and how is that form going to manifest and so on, at subtler level it is just the seeds of that – that are going to produce that. If it happens to be that seed is connected to that we are going to be manifesting a human body in the next lifetime then that seed will

come and unfold as human body. We might not come back as a human body. We might come back as a different form.

Rick: Do animal bodies have all the chakras too?

Lawrence: You know, I have never looked into that. So I don't know how many chakras or what their subtle body physiology is.

Rick: All right. So then at some point the whole process begins to go in reverse so to speak in terms of awakening to higher and higher centers within the body and eventually back up to the Sahasrara. Is this the appropriate time to touch upon that?

Lawrence: Sure. And it's not a mistake that the Shakti has created this physical form to evolve and experience its own unfolding of creativity and to explore the universe of limitation, the universe of form, the universe of a body, of intentions. In the yogic tradition, this realm is called Karmabhoomi. It's the realm of coming to know very clearly the laws of cause and effect and how we create reality and what we are creating or putting out on more and more subtle levels comes back to us and shapes our experience and so it is seen as and could be experienced as across lifetimes we are evolving and evolving to a greater consciousness and it comes to a point where there is -in the sense metaphorically a level of ripening, a level of readiness where that journey that process of evolution and exploration of what it means to be everything, you know from the victim to the perpetrator, the lover, to the beloved, the rejected, the accepted, the embraced; everything is part of that exploration of consciousness and that's why we can have residues of memories like that that can go back in the past lifetimes. But there does come a point where evolution and our consciousness comes that readiness and it's you know I remember something bigger and better and there is something more and there begins to be this longing to know, to go beyond just the things that are offered to us by our culture, by our family, by our peers whatever it is. There becomes this innate longing and in the sense that longing is part of that initial phase of awakening. Because it is spurred by there is more than just this material world, there is more than just emotional satisfaction. People may have intuitions, they might have peak experiences, they might have had something happen in a dream. Those initial phases of awakening to something that transcends ordinary reality – we are equipped to know that. It's our birth right to know that and at some point, we are summoned by our own nature, by our own consciousness to shift into knowing on that level.

Rick: Would you agree that longing is sort of an evolved form of the basic driver of all desires. I mean I long to have that sports car, I long to have that partner or whatever. And you get those things and well now I long for something else because that didn't do it for me. But this longing you just referred to is sort of like you have tried all that stuff so to speak and you somehow realize that the fulfillment of all longing is to be found within and not in outer objects.

Lawrence: Right. And it's that evolution to discover that and also, we will have to look back and see. This is the nature of that evolution when we are entering those domains.

We begin to see that and look compassionately at all beings. Because all longing, all desire at root is the desire to know the One. And instead of being confused by the reflection of that One in its ephemeral nature as being associated with the possession of this object of desire that's when we start to look beyond.

Rick: I think ideas you are expressing can probably be found in many traditions but are you specifically expressing the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism here?

Lawrence: I think Kashmir Shaivism gives some of the clearest expression of that, but to me I always look to the mystics of traditions because they were the knowers, and so I looked at the mystics, the Christian mystics, the Sufi mystics, the poet saints because their expressions that's what is reflected in it. It is that same sense when you start to move into that – you are going, wait a minute, the Divine is everywhere and it's in everything, everything I long for is there, and all I was doing was confusing this reflection, this momentary appearance and illusion that it took this other form and wanting to possess that in some way.

Rick: There was a thing you coded from the gnostic Jesus, “The kingdom of God is spread upon the earth and man do not see it”.

Lawrence: Yes.

Rick: All right. So Kundalini starts awakening. And for you I guess it's been a pretty blissful process for the most part. You know all kinds of wonderful experiences and you know revelations and cognitions and openings and awakenings. Have you ever had a rough time with it? I mean I am in touch with couple of people who are basically completely incapacitated by the Kundalini awakening to the point where they can't even function or get out of bed or anything. It's pretty horrific situation and you do hear these scare stories about Kundalini. So, has your experience always been pretty blissful and did it reach some of kind of conclusion. You feel like you are fully cooked in this respect. Somebody sent me an e-mail, they said what they wanted to know whether you have gone through this whole thing yourself and if not how can you help anybody if you haven't been through the whole thing start to finish and she mentioned that Papaji once said that he will be sort of dealing with that energy. He said, the Kundalini would dog him to his dying day. (Laughter..) So, it would almost seem that even if you are enlightened there is going to be continuous dealing with this energy. So please comment on all that.

Lawrence: Okay, that's a lot...

Rick: I was listening to Obama's press conference yesterday and Peter Alexander asked him this long three or four-part question. Obama said, “I must be getting old, I really can't deal with these multipart questions anymore”.

(Laughter)

Lawrence: So.... Yes...Kundalini is unfolded and has become my living reality and I don't know Papaji or what his experience was. But to me, to be in my beloved's embrace and the dance of life for as long as life unfolds in its form that's my experience. So, my experience is that the continuous becoming, continuous creativity, the Shakti of universe that's what unfolds and that's what she keeps revealing that every facet, everything that appears is literally a face of the Divine and that's the continued unfolding. Have there been tough times? There have been very challenging times. There have been painful times. There has been physical pain, there has been emotional pain, there have been times when I wondered how am I going to function trying to carry the experiences, times when I have had to just put experiences aside in the sense and sort of have a safe container within myself and go on with getting absorbed in writing my PhD thesis. You know one of the things I write about in the book, *The Soul's Journey* was I have had experiences that unfolded of Shakti giving me the direct experience of moving in that whole evolutionary pattern. So, involution is the experience of Shakti taking on form through the Chakras. Evolution is the evolution of consciousness up through that those symbolic stages back to knowing the infinite as yourself and all of the universe, all what we perceive as that one as our own self. And when I had that experience, I was in the midst of writing a dissertation and set aside some time to kind of create a personal retreat for myself to dive into that level of knowing. Because I didn't want to just be writing a dissertation. My doctoral research was on Kundalini and the various dimension of transformation that happen to people who have been engaged in Kundalini practices and awakening for 10 or more years. So, having that experience it was so overwhelming in certain ways and though it was probably the greatest fruit of my research it also didn't have any place in academic writing and wasn't something that I could then put into a research paper. So, I had to have a way of trying to contain that and go, no, but I still have to write dissertation in an abstract form about these things. And so, there are various demands that happen for many people. How do we contain it? How we move through it? What's happening with the body when it's working on an area and its horrifically painful and difficult moving through the ways that the Shakti is trying to transform the physical body and transform the subtle body, so that they become instruments both of knowing and participating in that Divine creation and being able to experience it in their own way. The body wants to know the bliss of infinite in the way the body can. The mind or consciousness even as a limited form wants to know the ecstasy, the rapture, the love that comes through the Divine. And the energy that's remaking the entire body and physical body as an instrument of the Divine for both knowing the deal and participating. That kind of process, you know the Yogis knew it was kind of a ruthless process and so very often Kundalini was sought after but only after many kinds of purificatory processes were done and deep practices were done to help really set the stage for a smoother awakening. But now people are having spontaneous awakening. And it winds up being that you know even in the Yogic literature Kundalini awakening didn't mean you got enlightened and experienced that infinite Divine in one lifetime, it could be several lifetimes that it's going to evolve through. And the forms that you will take will evolve with that, but some of those initial phases of awakening can be quite challenging. So, our ordinary consciousness is limited to this one lifetime perspective and consciousness itself isn't. Not in the least. And Kundalini isn't. Not in

the least. She says, “I’m going set you free”. Does that mean I am going to obey cultural bounds? Not necessarily...

Rick: A friend of mine who asked that question that I just read, I interviewed a guy few weeks ago, Harri Aalto, I have interviewed him a few times, and he has basically had a smooth ride, pretty awakened as a child and just cruise in along ever since for decades. He had a brief period in his 20s where he lost pure consciousness for about 15 seconds. He said it was a most horrible experience of his life, but he regained it. I think something was showing him the contrast you know. But she doubts that he could really be awake because he never went through hell. Never went through crucible that so many people go through but from what you just said previous lifetimes and so on, maybe he did all that and just had a little remnant to deal with when he came in here.

Lawrence: Well, I don’t know him, I don’t know his evolutionary process but I think what also unfolds over lifetimes and you can certainly see this in a classic form of Buddha. Buddha’s evolution even as Buddha trying to evolve a form that would hold Buddha consciousness went through lifetimes, and there may be a lifetime where we are less aware of the painful memories of having incarnated in challenging forms, but they come back in part, my belief is, I mean my experience is that the pain that we experience as ephemeral as it is, as on one level completely illusory, from the level of the absolute there is none, but from the level of the conventional mind - the individual contacted nature of being, pain is very real and to have that direct knowing and recollection of that – to me is what forms my life also with compassion and that I see many times my body has gone through tremendous pain, still does frankly, I mean, there are many kinds of things that occur physically, they don’t define who am I, they don’t limit my consciousness in the least, but they also keep the door open, no, that level of pain and suffering that all beings go through is part of what makes us aware and connect with a deep compassion. To me, the exalted states are states of profound and boundless compassion, profound love, profound kindness. That’s what marks the flow of the real essential nature of Shakti, as this loving presence that embraces all and both sees the pain and the suffering and offers a way to be free of it. It’s like the archetype of Tara or Kwan Yin, that hears the suffering of all beings and reaches out to draw us past that.

Rick: When you yourself go through painful and uncomfortable things even now, do you immediately sort of realize, well, the vehicle is being further purified that’s what is going on, and you just grin and bear it.

Lawrence: I know that this is the nature of the body. Even when Buddha talked about getting free of suffering didn’t mean that you know, if you smacked your leg, it wasn’t going to hurt. That’s not the level of freedom of suffering that we are talking about. And so, my body is a vehicle in this lifetime and it came in with its karma and it has nearly died a couple of times or more. It’s gone through various injuries, surgeries and these kinds of things and some of them I felt directly just the hand of grace like early on reach in and carry me through that and now that is who carries me through every moment.

Rick: There is an interesting passage in your book you say – there have been approaches in the Yoga traditions that try to dominate the Kundalini to forcefully push Kundalini to do this or that by prescribing endless of exercises of forced breathing and body postures that are meant to bind and force Kundalini to go into the direction that the Yogi wants her to go. Not surprisingly, these are also traditions that often say Kundalini is dangerous and must be controlled. Devotees that approach Kundalini as the great Goddess with their loving devotion have an entirely different experience. They gain her boons or gifts of enlightenment without having to fear what may be provoked by some forceful domineering practice.

Lawrence: Right. So, part of what I was getting at in writing about that was – I don't know if your audience and you are familiar with the work of Riane Eisler. But others who have written about sort of the evolution of how the Divine feminine was related to and understood from going back 30,000 years to where and how we relate to her now. And Riane Eisler does a beautiful job and I won't reiterate all her work but showing how as the masculine begin to dominate more and you know that early cultures, early human culture was dominated by the Divine feminine, the great Goddess, and our ways of relating to the Universe to each other, she goes through and shows how cultures didn't have fortifications. There was a different way of relating to each other and as the masculine began to develop and it's a natural development of consciousness this way of relating to the Divine began to shift and she coined the phrase the dominator mode because that was part of that kind of masculine patriarchal development of tradition and patriarchal religious traditions and approaches to the Divine that evolved at it and that also touched even in the East the traditions related to Shakti, the Kundalini and so this way of trying to dominate the energy, diminish it and say oh it's just this psychophysiological energy or it's just the energy that yogi has to prod and force into awakening and then has to forcefully guide and direct reflects that kind of dominator mode of consciousness in relationship to the Divine feminine. And especially my experience is directly and I was delighted with Muktananda's way of teaching it also was completely different. He was really honoring her as the great Goddess and I wrote in the Soul's Journey a story about how there was very famous author came to see Muktananda and he had written about Kundalini and his experiences of her as being fairly mundane and ordinary, and he was at the ashram; this was up in South Fallsburg and I was there at that time and Muktananda had kind of a reception called Darshan. There is this reception when we meet with people and talk with them more individually. This author was sitting outside waiting for his turn to go in and see Muktananda. And as he was sitting there, he had this vision of Goddess Kundalini walking by to go in and she was resplendent. She was the great Goddess. Jewels, beautiful sari, gold, radiant beyond belief and he was bowled over. And finally, his turn came to go inside and he went inside and he was looking around to see if she was still there and he bowed to Muktananda and said, "you know I had this experience, waiting for you I have seen the Goddess Kundalini come in and she was magnificent, yet to me she just appears sort of ordinary and mundane. It didn't inspire anything like that, how can that be? And Muktananda looked at him said, "simply, because I worship her.

Rick: That's beautiful. I knew the whole story from your book and I was enjoying hearing you tell it, which brings up an interesting point in terms of the heart I suppose and devotional qualities being valuable on the spiritual path and that's not always the case. I mean a lot of times spiritual path and teachers are kind of dry and not a lot of that dimension. I mean from what you have been saying last few minutes we could almost roughly categorize spiritual practices or approaches in terms of like hyper masculine versus feminine and the former being effortful and arduous and controlling and so on and so forth and latter sort of having more qualities of surrender and devotion and cooperation with the Divine intelligence rather than trying to dominate it in some way.

Lawrence: I am sure you are familiar with this, but one of the beautiful ways that the yogic tradition has helped to delineate the different paths, the different forms of Yoga and so part of that has to do with people's temperaments. And so, thinking type might be more of a Jnana yoga and approach coming to know the infinite through the contemplation of not this, not this and Neti, Neti and Who am I? and use the power of viveka, discrimination to finally differentiate what's the nature of the infinite that's present at all times and the ephemeral constructive nature of the ego and the personality. Whereas bhakta, approaches through feeling and emotion and love.

Rick: But it's interesting because whichever approach one takes, one sort of ends up with both, at least in terms of many historical examples. You know, guys like Shankara became great devotees and there have been great Bhaktas who have been great Jnanis also, you know had this profound wisdom that they could articulate and so on. Like Trotakacharya who was Shankara's disciple he was a Bhakta basically but he ended up with this profound wisdom and Shankara made him his principal disciple.

Lawrence: And Shankaracharya once in writing the Soundarya Lahari then recognized that the Kundalini was the basis of all the realization and that it was that power of the infinite that is the power to know all those dimension, all those facets. So, the individual mind gets you know sort of page-by-page, a snapshot-by-snapshot of the infinite and can mistake the part for the whole. Whereas when we enter into that consciousness we see the indivisible unity of the knowing, the feeling, the consciousness, the love, the compassion that is always completely present in their fullness all the time.

Rick: With all this talk that we have been doing about practices and progress and lifetimes and you know we make it sound like a fairly long-term enterprise. What do you make of these people who are kind of popular these days, some of them who say things like you are already enlightened you know just kind of accept that and you don't need to do practices, practices imply a practitioner and you are just reinforcing duality and so on. What do you make of that whole attitude?

Lawrence: There are times when cutting through the duality, that's what I hear is important, and they may or may not be aware of how many lifetimes it took for them to get to that time and to that perspective and that understanding, doesn't change that they still went through that process and that they are reaching out. In Shaivite tradition, part of the tradition is looking at what are called Upayas. Upaya is means. And so, when you

look at the Shiva Sutra, one of the principal text of Kashmir Shaivism, and this is true across that tradition, but Upaya means, you as a seeker, you want to engage in the level of means that's appropriate to your level of understanding and practice and consciousness. And so, there are means that are - if we are in a dualistic state there are means like devotional practices, a lot of what goes as yoga – Hatha Yoga – ways of even doing mantra yoga, different practices that are aimed at there is a sense of there is a practitioner, there is practice and there is the aim of the practice. And these things are all separate, this dualistic separated consciousness and their practices that are trying to help ease our way out of that illusion to enter unity consciousness, but they are engaging and they are helpful at that stage. And then there is what could be called Beda Upaya. Beda means different, separate. Then there is a sort of a next stage what's called beda-abeda. You are in a state where you are kind of mixed. You sort of get a sense of unity and sometimes you get an intuition or feeling of that, but you still kind of get caught up in duality, your mind is sort of tethering on the edge, and there are practices, there are Shaktipaya, practices aimed at just helping that movement, shift. They are not as gross as you know you wave an aarti tray and do pooja to some external form, because now you start to merge with that, you have started to reap the rewards of that outer practice of becoming united with that one that you are approaching with devotion. So that's a different level of practice. And then abeda upaya where we are just about there, Shambhava upaya where your consciousness is right on the edge. The veil is thinner than smoke. Well, if you did something as gross as even thinking about union you would be back down into a different upaya. And so, the practices that are understood on that level are much more subtle, much more refined. And so, when a teacher presents a practice even if it's the practice of no-practice, just like of duality there you are, well right on that edge it's a perfect message, kind of going to be there. But if you are really caught up in another level that may be out of reach, not because it's not true but because what you are identified with means I need the shoehorn to help pry me out of this. You know that's how I look at that.

Rick: That's a really good point. And there are some teachers around who are kind of one size fits all and they work for some people, others get frustrated, but the really great ones like Ramana Maharshi seem to be able to tune into the level of development of whoever came and advocate or encourage them to do something appropriate for them and it might change. And as a matter of fact, even the notion of – you say somewhere in your writings about having discrimination to know when to leave a teacher. It might be a teacher is completely appropriate for you up to a certain point and then at a certain point you have kind of grown, it's necessary to go from High School to college or grammar school to high school or something to get to move on.

At one point in your book you wrote the ancient text Kularnava Tantra states that without Shaktipat there is no liberation or self-realization. The descent of grace may happen spontaneously, unexpectedly or through the power of a master of genuine attainment. In some cases, Shaktipat is received through contact with a mystic guide who appears in one's dreams or meditation. Often it is awakened through a mantra or practices learnt from an accomplished spiritual teacher. Also, it may have been awakened in the past life and is continuing to unfold in this life. So Muktananda was famous for doing Shaktipat, kind of popularized the term in a way and he did it with peacock feathers, as I recall.

Lawrence: That was one way.

Rick: That was one way, and you notice the picture of Amma over my shoulder here, she hugs people and that's a form of Shaktipat. Let's talk a little bit about Shaktipat. You basically said here that it is essential. There is no liberation or self-realization without it, so let's talk about what it is.

Lawrence: So Shaktipat literally means descent of Shakti, descent of the power of consciousness to know itself. And you know it's simply a way of saying that the ego might can't get there on its own. There is no limit to the number of different ways Shaktipat can happen, and so that power of grace that power of the infinite that bestows grace that is why it's called Shaktipat. It was not called Muktanandapat or (Laughter)it is called Shaktipat. Shakti is that universal power that awakens us that can take us beyond the confines of the finite. And part of way you can understand why it is said to be absolutely necessary is the power, when we are talking about that map that said you know causal body, subtle body, physical body. Some people are familiar with that. Causal – how does the causal body come to be and why is it called causal. So that is the first shift from universal infinite consciousness beginning to take on or set the stage for taking on form. The state of consciousness that goes with the causal body because each of those bodies has a state of consciousness that goes with it. The state of consciousness the yogis call a deep sleep which is the continuous awareness of nothingness. It's the black void. It's called causal because it's the state where Shakti of its own freewill has negated the awareness of its infinitude and its unity with all that is. In that negation comes the black veil of void. It is what creates the Shakti has created that. That sets the stage then for consciousness then contracting further...

Rick: And here you mean literal sleep like we do at night. You don't just mean this metaphorical sleep of ignorance or something, but sleep.

Lawrence: No. Well, it's also avidya, would also be a way of talking that, primal ignorance, the primal root cause of suffering is avidya. Avidya means not knowing your unity. But that's not an accident that was some other force outside of the Divine imposed that. That was a Shakti going. Well, in order for me to play as a finite domain, I have to not know. I have to occlude that.

Rick: Hide and Seek...

Lawrence: Hide that behind the curtain for a bit. So, if Shakti is the one that created that who is going to uncreate that. You know well, Shaktipat. So that's what that is. The Shaktipat is the meaning that it's the influx of the power to awaken to know itself in its magnificence, its infinitude again. So Shaktipat is that influx of consciousness beyond just the ordinary mind that allows us to experience what we are in our fullness because the ordinary mind is the part, part cannot know the whole. The wave doesn't know the ocean, it's part of the ocean. So Shaktipat is just the way of talking about that influx of consciousness that then can undo that primal level of ignorance of not knowing that was

part of creation of individuality of universal form. And that's why there is no limitation on how Shaktipat can happen. You can say, it can happen in a dream, it can happen spontaneously, it can happen in past life, it can happen because of a practice, it can happen connected to a being through whom Shakti flows and chooses to flow through that conduit. To me, I am always clear about talking about it in that way that individual can be a conduit. If you are dying of thirst and you go to the water fountain and you get a drink of water and you go, ah that's so good. You don't kiss the fountain and stay in hanging out by the fountain. It was the water that quenched your thirst. So, understanding that as there are forms through which this power flows so magnificently. We can revere and respect them, but it's the power of consciousness, this power of grace that reveals that within ourselves that we really truly honor and revere.

Rick: Nice. A question came in from Dan in London. It is a little long, but Dan always asks good questions, so here we go. "While doing a TM practice, transcendental meditation and being barely aware of my body, I suddenly had a thought that I needed to let go of all the attachments that I have to my family. Following this, I suddenly had an explosion of energy at the bottom of spine. The energy rose about half way up my spine and was very intense and it was kind of accompanied my bits of my life flashing to my mind and somehow deciding to let go of things. Once the energy reached about half way up my spine it stopped and gradually subsided. Over the next couple of weeks, I had back pain but that gradually went. This happened about two years ago. I did have lots of other experience of very strong energy previous to this while asleep, but this was the only time it happened while awake and it was the only time it fitted the traditional description happening from the bottom of the spine and with such ferocity. These kinds of energetic experiences have now not happened for a while. Do you have any advice on this or can you recommend a practice perhaps to supplement TM?"

Lawrence: Right. So, what he is talking about is the experience of sort of language of Kundalini tradition, we would talk about Kriyas. Kriya means movement of. So kriyas are movement of the energy, the Shakti, the power of consciousness. And those kriyas can occur on the physical level. So, they can be a part of the physical body and you can literally get physical movements. You can get people going into spontaneous Hatha Yoga postures. It is understood that most of the or all of the Hatha Yoga asanas, postures were first seen as a result of Kriyas that people go into that and the Shakti is bringing them into that kind of movement. And then it was sort of codified and systemized with the notion that if you practice that you would both be helping to purify the physical and subtle body and set the stage for that kind of expansion and awakening. Kriyas can happen on a subtle body level where there are energetic movements, flashes of light, sounds, energy movement, all kinds of things, anything that is within the domain of the mind can be subject to or experienced in some way as a Kriya moving through consciousness and there are practices that you can do to help support that, just work that energetic flow. And that can be things including practices like Hatha Yoga, Tai Chi, you know many of these practices. Chi is another word like Prana for manifestation of the energy of Kundalini. So, there can be ways of working with that. Also, ways of using another principle set of forms for engaging Shakti in its more and more expansive nature is mantra. The very basis of mantra, all mantra arises out of Kundalini. Kundalini is

what formed the basis of mantra and so when you are engaging in mantra and different levels you are engaging in Shakti. So, deepening ones understanding of that helps, that can be reading and studying about it. I read a lot about it, couple of my books about nature of mantra. There are mantras that come from traditions that are infused with Shakti. They are known as real vehicle for awakening Shakti as opposed to a mantra that might be more into focusing or purifying a certain part of the body or doing some other kind of action. So being engaged in mantra on different levels is a very profound and powerful set of practices and that would be congruent because essentially TM was making use of bija mantra as a way of doing that and so I worked with a lot of TM practitioners and teachers who have come to programs and they very much understood and resonated with that and then were able to sense the Shakti, the power that came through mantras that were given to me to pass on as Shakti mantras, so those kinds of ways of exploring it, and shifting that understanding. Part of way I read what happened when it opened the door of letting go of things about life. That's letting go of ways that we are identifying sort of binding our energy, not literally throwing them away, because you continue to live your life and have those relationship, but it opens the door. So, what are the ways even in amidst of everyday practice you let go of those things. What are the ways that even as you hold the mantra, you can hold the mantra in a limiting way, because the understanding of mantra is limited and in a sense, they are closing the door to all the Shakti, all the power of consciousness that is inherent in that mantra that can take them beyond that that could open the heart to the boundless love that is present there, the consciousness that suffuses their life.

Rick: Good. So Dan's experience is kind of a nice one and I understand that at one point you were overseeing the clinic or something in Ganeshpuri, India, Muktananda's Ashram there and you know there was freak out a minute basically, people you know just being blasted by the Shakti that was awakening in them and I eluded earlier to couple of people who have been in touch with me who are really going through a rough time, basically their lives are on hold while they suffer intensely, no one knows how long it's going to last or how it's going to end up, so what measures did you use in Ganeshpuri, what have you learnt since then, what would you offer people who are undergoing some kind of Kundalini process or at least they think it's a Kundalini process and that's worth touching upon too, perhaps it could be something else and they should see doctor, but the flipside of that is if it is a Kundalini process and you go to see a doctor chances are that doctors are going to completely misunderstand and put you on Thorazine or something and that's not going to be helpful. So how do you deal with people who are rather having severe symptoms of Kundalini awakening. How can you help them?

Lawrence: And that's a lot of what the book *Awakening Kundalini – The Path to Radical Freedom* I go into, what's integrative kind of holistic perspective on working with things. Fortunately, in Baba's Ashram in Ganeshpuri there weren't freak-outs a minute, there were some but most people were having even if they were intense experiences the contacts, the practices, the discipline, the grace of the master really held that and so it was here and there – there were people who needed some extraordinary measures and we were there to help them. So, working with that, part of that is having a context that really helps and that's part of what I write about in *Awakening Kundalini*

book is somebody is going through challenging processes. Well, there can be numerous things going on. There can be genuine medical physiological disorders that are being worked through karmically and they can't just be dismissed as Kundalini. I have seen people need anything from Endocrine therapies and found to be deficient in certain hormones that were being dismissed as Kundalini. That didn't mean it all got reduced to that medical thing. So, Western medicine can be reductionistic and that violates a person's sense of deep meaningful nature of this spiritual process that is unfolding and the symptoms can be from a medical perspective than looked as just the symptoms on a physiological or psychological level. So, it is very helpful to work with people who have some kind of understanding. But even if not, if you need medical help, you might really need to see a doctor and be able to work with had you present enough of symptoms to get help without trying to get them to understand Kundalini.

Rick: Do you consult with people here and there or even over Skype for long distance who are going through stuff and do you ever like to do a three way with the person and their doctor trying to educate the doctor a bit about what they might be going through.

Lawrence: I have never done a three way with additional consultant physician. I have been trying to help people find who might be able to be a consultant to work with and there are times and it's by no means that everytime, you know somebody if their mind really is being overflowed by the content that is being stirred by Shakti, there are instances where people benefit by using medications that are used within psychiatry – either short term or even long term. There were individuals at the Ashram in Ganeshpuri who had been early on in their life diagnosed with schizophrenia. That was part of their karma. Without medications that empowered them to live a much more normal life they would have been psychotic and Baba used to say very clearly, the same Shakti that takes form of the Universe is taken in the form of the medication to help you through this, so take your medication. He never saw medication as adverse to the processes of Shakti and unfolding of the consciousness.

Rick: It could be. I mean one could heavily dose somebody with Thorazine or something and you are basically just suppressing that energy that needs to be worked through in a more intelligent way...

Lawrence: Right, but that would be to me mismanagement and not proper management.

Rick: Speaking of schizophrenics, you had a great line from Lilly Tomlin. You said, Lilly said, "When you talk to God its prayer, but when God talks back you are labeled as schizophrenic".

Lawrence: Right. And what does that say about our relationship to God.

(Laughter)

Rick: Hopefully, we have done justice to that. Maybe there will be some questions, people can read your book and look in greater detail into what you offer, but...

Lawrence: In part of what I talk about is also those are sort of the extremes, and there are many people who would just benefit from some additional support along the way that's why Buddha characterized it very beautifully in terms of looking at the three jewels that help support a person doing their practices. And the three jewels are like you know the three legs of a stool with only two or one you cannot stand on it, but with all three you got them. And that's a competent teacher, that's a set of the teachings and practices and community, sangha that Buddha talked about, and so having people to relate to. In part that's a great thing that you do as a service is trying to help create a sangha, albeit a virtual one or through the technology, but offering people ways to be able to relate to and connect and understand how do we get support for this and what might a massage therapist help or a restorative yoga teacher help with or a Jungian psychologist in working with dreams and archetypes help with, that all of these can be supports in that unfolding, that unique unfolding. This is part of what was always sought after about Kundalini is that rather than Hatha Yoga as a path and you learn 84 asanas and you do this kind of pranayama and do this kind of thing Kundalini was the process that when its awakened it begins to unfold a very unique sadhana for you. And that changes shifts and demands a subtlety and demands this ability to be attuned to and dance with the energy. The diet that is right for you at one point might be a different at another time. The kinds of exercises, practices that you do at one point might evolve into something else at another time that supports that unfolding and expansiveness of consciousness so that you really get to live that extraordinary informed life.

Rick: And I think just a little bit of knowledge can go a long way. I mean, when I first started having some Kundalini symptoms, I guess they were, it was like after my first one month meditation course and I remember sitting on a couch in a friends' living room and my face started to go through all these involuntary contortions and grimaces and weird things and then my head started to go like this – you know. At that time, I was driving an ice cream truck and it got so – whenever I sat still I would start to jerk around and like I came to a stop sign of my ice cream truck and started to jerk around, but I understood what was going on –

Lawrence: Right.

Rick: Okay something good is happening here. I am just going to ride this out and after a while it subsided and diminished and there have been various things over the years, but if I hadn't known – had some sense of what that was, I might have been totally freaked out, thought I was developing some kind of neurological condition or something.

Lawrence: Right...

Rick: That's why I think it's good we are having these kinds of conversation and the knowledge of the stuff is more widely disseminated.

Lawrence: Right...

Rick: Okay...you have sort of talked about chakras, just a quick question, little bit out of context. You know, you mentioned the Sushumna nadi, and then there is ida and pingala that are said to go around the Sushumna nadi and some people say that – what is called? caduceus?

Lawrence: Caduceus, ya.

Rick: And the symbol of AMA is actually representative of that, the snake coiling around the pillar or something. Here descriptions are written. It is actually they give it some physical dimension how small it is, but it's not something any physiologist has ever found, so I presume that despite the fact that it has been described as having a certain size or width it's subtle, it's not some little tube going up your spine.

Lawrence: Right. Yes, it's again part of the subtle body and the subtle physiology and it's that channel that connects the infinite from Sahasrara all the way through to the finite domain of the Muladhara and so it's also a way of saying that that connection on a subtle body level is there energetically and that it is always resounding with the sound of Aum, the Aum resounds within that channel continuously meaning that, that universal presence of consciousness that throbbing vibration infuses all levels of manifestation and can be accessed through all levels of manifestation.

Rick: Here is a passage from your book I want to read related to this – you said, “The Kundalini moves through the Sushumna nadi erasing the impressions stored there and releasing the energy bound up in those impressions. This extraordinary purification process then releases us from the patterns in our lives created by those impressions. Secondly, she opens up states of consciousness that give us access to unbounded awareness, awareness of the transcendent self what some called God consciousness. In order for that state of unity consciousness to become stable and fully manifest in the mind, body and actions of the individual the Sushumna nadi and all the lesser nadis must be purified, cleansed of impression and blocks that contract or restrict consciousness to the confines of ordinary human experience. So these impressions I would conjecture – and see what you think, they may be gross physiological impressions such as chemical or structural imbalances but they correspondingly would have a subtle counterpart that isn't gross or isn't physical at all and that you know you can pull the table by any one leg and the whole table will come along, so there are gross physical practices that can help to work out those impressions and that would probably help to work them out in the subtle and then there are subtle practices or processes that would work them out on that level and correspondingly they would be released or resolved on the gross.

Lawrence: Sure. Yes. And that's why various systems have developed the ways, movements. Tai Chi is a system of movement, but it's a psychophysiological exercise. Asanas are psychophysiological exercises. They are not just physical exercises. They are working on the physical and the subtle body. Mantra as a practice goes through different levels. There is a sound when you are actually saying the mantra. If you are saying “Om Namah Shivaya” “Om Namah Shivaya”, “Om Namah Shivaya” there is a physical sound. It impacts the physical body and the power of mantra literally penetrates

right through to the bone on that level and impacts the physical level of the body. When you start to take that to the subtle level and now you just become absorbed in the subtle awareness of the throb and the repetition of “Om Namah Shivaya” “Om Namah Shivaya” without any sound and now that begins to take on and you begin to even hear it because it is already preexisting, you begin to hear it repeating itself and now it’s working throughout the subtle body and purifying levels of that and then it sheds physical form, subtle form entirely. It’s still mantra, but now it’s just the throb of consciousness. It is the pulsation of awareness and that is beginning to cut through the causal body. Because causal body is awareness of limited being as opposed to infinite being and so consciousness of mantra can begin to be just this throb of awareness that moves through that and then brings us back to that expansion, that absolute infinitude of our being, right here, right now, and that’s who we are and that is the source of mantra.

Rick: There is a metaphor that you are familiar with that the TM movement used to use is that of an Ocean. There is surface level of the waves which will be like surface level of mind and then there are deeper levels to the ocean and then there is sort of ocean floor. And thoughts were represented as bubbles coming up through this ocean. And ordinarily you don’t experience the bubbles till it pops on the surface but the point was using mantra you can sort of ride the bubble down so to speak to subtler and subtler levels of it or in the case of we are talking about here subtler-subtler impulses of thought and quieter, more refined, more abstract and until eventually thought is transcended altogether and the self is left in its pure state, pure awareness. So, I just thought I throw that in, it could help to illustrate the point you are making.

Lawrence: Yes.

Rick: Any more comments on that point before I shift gears?

Lawrence: It’s important I think to understand also that the whole understanding, viewing the unfolding of consciousness from the paradigm of Kundalini is just one paradigm for understanding. You don’t have to know that. You don’t have to know anything about chakras. You don’t have to know anything about the Sushumna nadi, you don’t have to know anything about that domain at all to know the infinite. This is the way of understanding. It’s one map. That’s what I was talking before. These are maps. But there are paths that don’t use that map at all, and it’s not necessary for one to study that map and go okay – I have to go through these stages. I have to have these kinds of experiences. What’s wrong with me because I get this. What’s wrong with myself – I am not having this kind of experience and that kind of experience. There is nothing wrong with yourself – that may not be what you need at all in the unfolding of the Divine, unfolding of the infinite as your consciousness – when we are tuned to that is what is the motive force behind our expansion and our process of evolution, not just the mind’s desires for particular experiences or mind’s concepts of what’s required. But starting to really deeply be attuned to the movement of the Divine as your own self and what’s its summoning, what it’s calling to you, how that’s going to draw you into meditation, how it is going to open up the experiences of the heart that embrace your life

and your work and these kinds of things. You may have nothing to do with chakras and nadis and all this other stuff and they can be a real distraction I think for people.

Rick: Yes, but if this is a valid understanding that we have chakras and nadis and Sushumna and Kundalini all this stuff then we have them whether or not we know about them. I mean we all have a liver even though we may – there might have been cultures where people didn't know they had a liver, but still they would be dead if they didn't have the liver. So, Zen monks and Tibetan Buddhist and Native American, South American shamans and everybody else regardless of the understanding of their particular tradition must have chakras and....

Lawrence: Right. They might look at it very differently.

Rick: They might explain it differently.

Lawrence: Right. They might look at it you know as Saint Teresa of Avila and you know the Seven Mansions and a process of coming into the living presence of the Divine. So, the archetypes may have a different inflection to them. And yes, it's going to unfold. So, this is to me what's important about understanding Kundalini as the power of revelation and transformation and how she is going to manifest in that way. For some people, they never have an experience of the Divine feminine; it's always in the Divine masculine. And sometimes Jung's work help people to understand that because sometimes it's women saying to me, I don't see the Goddess, but I see Shiva, I see Krishna, I see this. It's the Divine masculine that's taken the form of revelation and that's their way that unfolding of the Shakti is manifesting for them. So, all forms that's the root understanding; all forms are her forms, all forms are born of a mother. All forms are that universal Shakti.

Rick: I think it's also worth mentioning according to one's physiological makeup we have different proclivities in terms of what we experience. Some people just aren't very visually oriented and they are not going to have visual thing of Shiva, Mother Divine or anything else.

Lawrence: Right.

Rick: They just aren't wired that way. So, if you're kind of expecting to or thinking you should or something like that, you may end up frustrated.

Lawrence: Well, there was a very funny thing that I was sitting with Muktananda at one time and it was the Darshan line which was when you know thousands of people came up to greet him and one fellow came up on the line and bowed before him and was saying you know, Baba, Baba I want to see God, I want to see that light, I want to see those lights that people talk about that you have written about. And Baba looked at him and said, you want to see lights. And he goes – yes, yes. Baba pointed out and goes there is a crystal chandelier. There, there look at all those lights. (Laughter..) And then he said,

now do you want to see God as God is revealing himself to you or do you want to see the form that you are looking for?

Rick: There is another question that occurred to me when you were saying that previous piece and that is – different paths I think are equipped to provide different sorts of openings or different degrees of progress. It's like to take an analogy, we don't blame biology for not telling us about quantum mechanics, because it's just not biology's role to talk about quantum mechanics. Even though quantum mechanics is in some sense fundamental to biology, biology doesn't go there, it has its realm. So, I think that there are certain spiritual disciplines and tradition which have a realm which may not encompass the entire range of possibility but which are effective and bring about a certain quality or degree of development. What do you think about that?

Lawrence: Right. Ya, I mean I think that's part of what you meant also before when you were saying, you may study with the teacher and their capacity to take you so far, you come to the end of their paradigm or their understanding or their teachings and still you are feeling the call to go further than that and so something else happens.

Rick: Ya and somebody else you know might decide to stay with that teacher, because perhaps that teacher can take that person further than he could take you. Different strokes for different folks!

So, this kind of segues into that gear shift that I wanted to do. Here is a passage. You say, "The power of Guru is universal power of God, is the power of divine revelation. One who functions as a Guru is a channel for that power and there are no perfect channels. It is seeker's responsibility to become familiar with the scriptures, the writings of other enlightened beings and the voice of their own inner source of wisdom. These three sources of knowledge provide a way of checking the validity of the teacher. Seekers must be vigilant and make every effort to sharpen their discrimination. Spiritual teachers of any school must be vigilant if they want to serve in God's work of bringing souls back to the recognition of their unity with Divine. If you want to give directions about a path then you better know that path, otherwise you will bear the karmic burden of having misled others, a burden that could take you many lifetimes to free yourself up." So, in your interview with Tami Simon you talked frankly about somewhat controversial things that Muktananda was accused of towards the end of his life and you basically characterized those things, you know some sexual valiances of certain kind as being symptomatic of some shortcoming in his personality. And to just play devil's advocate, we can talk about that and consider that possibility, but just to play devil's advocate, I was thinking well you know – Maybe some of the woman were unhappy about that and felt like that they had been used or abused or something, although from the accounts I read there was nothing forced or anything but maybe he was doing some kind of tantric thing where he was enlivening his energy and it actually had an evolutionary purpose for him, maybe I don't mean to excuse inappropriate behavior or imbalanced power relationship between Guru and disciple and maybe it was just inexcusable. But anyway, let's discuss this whole thing of teachers behaving responsibly or not and the importance

of discrimination on the part of the seeker in order not to get burned or disillusioned by such behavior.

Lawrence: Right. So, what would you like me to talk about that.

Rick: Well, I gave you a big long intro there, but here is a question that will get you started. Once those revelations came to light did you become cynical, did you become disillusioned, how did you rationalize or come to terms with that information.

Lawrence: Well, I did see it as – I saw it and I don't remember all of how Tami and I were talking about it. Certainly, with some teachers it can be a personality flaw with Baba, I saw it as part of his tantric practice and his tantric tradition and having known not until very late about that and then he died. I don't know if he had continued to live how I might have processed that or thought about, was I staying or leaving or what was going on. But I knew it wasn't in terms of being congruent with what one is trying to fulfill as a dharma, as a teacher, that's a real challenge. And how does a teacher... and so as I looked at that, I was going - well, how does a teacher fulfill that dharma of making teachings available at this time and this place and this culture. For instance, Buddha wouldn't allow woman to become initiated or become monks until near the very end of his life. And part of that because it was such a patriarchal tradition and it was a patriarchal society and women weren't supposed to have any kind of play in that. And so even when he allowed that to happen, he put the caveat that forever the most senior nun would always be junior to the most junior monk – this is how it was said – he was trying to sort of encode that ignorance that we would look at now in the tradition then.

Rick: I wonder if he really believed that or if he was trying to placate his contemporaries.

Lawrence: I think he was trying to make it acceptable. I mean that's my conjecture, for what that's worth. So to me processing what was going on with Baba there was for me also very clear the power of the teachings and the power of practices and I never believed in the paradigm of one is absolutely perfect, that a teacher is perfect and that was something that bothered me often about even some siddha yoga teachings was the perfection of the Guru and that it left people with a false understanding of what perfected man, when you look at it in the deeper light of understanding scriptures and text and then perfected in the practice of meditation and fully accomplished in that power not necessarily transfer the every single thing that they do is going to be absolutely perfect in itself. That's part of the recipe for how they are related to, but there is a level of discrimination that's to me required to understand how does that operate, what's going on with that.

Rick: I was thinking you know, well, we might say nature's intelligence is perfect uninterrupted by human interference and so on, but then look what happens in nature. I mean, animals are getting killed and there are volcanoes and there are forced fires and there are planets probably getting hit by asteroids wiping out all the life on them, all kinds of stuff happens in nature that may not seem very perfect, but that might just be our

sort of limited understanding of what “perfect” means which could be an alibi for egregious behavior. We don’t want to go there, but.

Lawrence: But that’s the notion, how do we use our discrimination and say okay this is where it crosses a boundary for me. For instance, early on one of my first teachers was Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche who was an alcoholic and was upfront about that. I mean, he never pretended to be not sexually involved with many different women. It wasn’t hidden in anyway nor was his drinking. His teachings were sublime. I remember being at talks and being at programs with him and being totally impressed and reading his works and being really informed by that kind of perspective and how much that helped me to understand things like the spiritual warrior and living in the world and in the spiritual materialism, meditation and all these different things - that his teachings and his practices supported me. But I couldn’t stand seeing him drink to the point where he was falling out of his chair, and I think that was intolerable to me. I couldn’t say that – that was the wrong thing – it was wrong for me to try and follow a teacher who had that thought.

Rick: I interviewed a very sweet gentleman named Sri M a few months ago. He is in India. We discussed this point. And his opinion was that, you know, these so called “crazy wisdom teachers” who are doing reprehensible things and writing it off as crazy wisdom, he felt, in his opinion they were “works-in-progress” that does not represent full enlightenment. That they had something, some awakening, some gift, some eloquence perhaps, but that they have more evolution yet to undergo and we shouldn’t take that as an acceptable example of the full potential of development of consciousness. I kind of resonate with that attitude, I think.

Lawrence: Right.

Rick: I guess on this point, I have friends who became totally disillusioned when they discovered their teacher and/or other teachers who are doing these sorts of things. I would encourage people not to become disillusioned, again we are all “works-in-progress” as The Firesign Theatre said, “We’re all bozos on this bus” and keep on truckin’ – you know to coin another 60s phrase.

Lawrence: Well, and that sense of developing the discrimination to be able to sort out, you know what’s the nature of the truth and the teachings, even the truth of what was being transmitted by that teacher and be able to hold that even if the teacher itself is – you know, you are moving away from, because they are abusive or they are this or that. There are teachers who have lot of Shakti, they have a lot of energy and they are abusive. That to me is unacceptable. And just because they have a lot of energy doesn’t give them a right to abuse anybody or engage in sexual abuse or emotional abuse or authoritarian abuse and to me whatever those channels are that have to be cleared so that a person is really a living presence that communicates. To me, the understanding of the boundless love, the boundless compassion, the boundless kindness, the boundless patience that is the nature of our true self, that is the Divine within us. And becoming more and more merged in that and informed by that, that the vehicle of mind and body become the

expressions of that, the flowering of that, that's where we see, to me, the kind of presence of grace. Too often the ordinary mind is impressed by power and sort of the raw use of power and not the humble presence of beautifully compassionate loving kind being and that to me is much more revealing of their nature of being one with or in communion with the infinite and being able to walk around both with this body and this mind as a facet, a face of the divine, the back door is open. The infinite is always pouring through. The infinite is informing our every moment, our experience, our life, how we look at the other, that there is no other. We are always looking at – oh! I am encountering another Divine face, another face of the infinite, of my own self standing before me or coming to me.

Rick: One drum that I keep beating on this show is that I think that it will be valuable and hope that the show is contributing to this for us as a spiritual culture, as a larger culture to gain greater and greater clarity of understanding about what enlightenment actually is and what example of enlightenment looks like because firstly it's inspiring. You know, it's something to really shoot for if you realize how marvelous it can be and secondly it can safeguard the path and prevent one from getting hung up in trips that are not going to be so helpful, I mean obviously, we learn from everything, but if you can avoid spending 20 years being abused; Leah Remini has this whole show on A&E right now about scientology and the horrors that she and others have gone through and how much money have melt for and things like that. So maybe scientology is good for some people, but if we just have a clear understanding what enlightenment and higher consciousness and all really is, seems to be it could really smooth and safeguard and accelerate the path for millions of people.

Lawrence: Well, that and being able to reflect what are we attracted to...

Rick: Yes, right.

Lawrence: You know, because there are people who they think the trappings of power, trappings of domination. We saw that in our presidential election, but these external trapping that mean nothing and can absolutely be a red flag to what the abuses are and what the unseen mistake of that being might be. We have to be self-reflective. What am I attracted to? Because I might be attracted to the very toxin, the very poison I need to confront. But better if they confront it internally.

Rick: That's a good point. What am I attracted to? We can't totally blame the teacher or the organization if we are attracted to something toxic. Like attracts like, you know there is something in us that is causing us – it reminds me of this animated movie. It's called A Bug's Life, and the funniest scene of the whole movie was it's a restaurant and this waiter comes out with a platter of poop and says, "who ordered the poo-poo platter?" and all these flies go, zooo....

(Laughter ...)

Rick: Okay. Time to shift notes I think on that... Maybe we are getting towards the end. But there is an interesting thing that you said in your book. You said, when it comes to higher realms of consciousness - the heart chakra, the throat chakra, and I presume you would also indicate the Ajna chakra - involving the actual power of consciousnesses underlying the mind the binding forces are greater. So, it kind of reminded me of the Lord of Rings where the closer Frodo got to the pit of doom or whatever it was called, the more difficult the temptation for him and it was only through I guess his friend Sam that he managed to get there but are you saying sort of the closer we get to the summit, so to speak the steeper the climb and the greater the challenges and tests and obstacles we may encounter.

Lawrence: Well, you are getting closer to the root of the mind and which means the root of bondage, because much of what we identify with is really the mind. And so, when you are entering the sort of levels that are representing the root nature of the mind then it really is...in that allegory that vision of Shakti then really moving, having to move the mind through that. That's the power then of that awaking of the Kundalini, the practice of awakened mantra that helps to move consciousness beyond the mind. The mind can only go so far and then it's just like trying to jump over your shadow, you can't, and so it really takes this influx and support of the inner power of grace. That's why Kundalini Shakti is the inner Guru. It is the power of the Guru. It is the power of the one that can take you beyond duality into unity, take you beyond the mind into the infinite mind – infinite consciousness.

Rick: Lot of people these days say, I don't need a Guru, I don't want a Guru, I will be my own Guru. Do you think that's a dicey situation that one really does need at least at certain critical stages of ones process an external Guru?

Lawrence: It's important to reflect on who's saying that. As we say it to ourselves who is the one saying that. It's usually the ego mind saying it. And the ego mind always wanted to make its own Guru and for most people that is their Guru. Who is the one saying, I am going to get up and I am going to do asanas in the morning or I am going to practice meditation. Oh, no, I don't feel like it today, I better skip it. You know, I really wanted to do. It's all the ego mind. And so, we are used to following the ego mind as the Guru. The problem with the ego mind as the Guru is we can't get best of itself, that's it, trying to jump over shadow. So, at some point there needs to be an influx of that Grace, that Power. Whether it's awakening to the inner Guru that then the ego mind has to relate to what's that living presence of the Divine within – that is the one who I need to follow – not just my ego mind. That's why ultimately all paths are path to surrender. They are surrender to being informed, motivated by, directed by that consciousness that is beyond the ego mind, but first the ego mind often relates to it as alien, separate, different, wary of, fearful of, all those different things. Part of the archetype of the Guru-disciple relationship and the aspect of it of having to do with obedience – was it was meant to be a reflection of how to get the ego mind to be completely surrendered to the living presence of the Divine within. And so, external Guru-disciple relationship was training to the ego mind to become completely obedient to the Divine within. Unfortunately, the external is

obviously subject to all kinds of distortion and perversions of that kind of authority. Just as the inner relationship is subject to all kinds of delusions. Both of them are dangerous.

Rick: Potentially dangerous.

Lawrence: Yes.

Rick: Yes, so it's the razor's edge, isn't it?

Lawrence: Yes.

Rick: Okay. This has been great. We have covered a lot of stuff. Is there anything that we haven't covered that comes to mind that you want to leave people with or discuss before we wrap up.

Lawrence: Yes. In the collection of poetry, Kali's Bazaar - and that's a collection of poetry that the infinite speaks to me in meditation and I do my best to be the scribe. One of the poems that just was coming to mind was - "Oh! what fun it is pretending there is we when we both know there isn't even a me." So, we have engaged in this convention, this pretence that there is a you and a me. And we have played around with that for couple of hours now, but the truth is - it just the one.

Rick: Yes. Interacting with the self.

Lawrence: Yes.

Rick: Great! That's a nice note to end on.

Rick: So as usual I will be putting up a page on BatGap with links to your websites and books and people can get in touch and you want to mention like what kind of stuff you offer.

Lawrence: Yes. We offer through Anam Cara Meditation Foundation we have local programs, free programs couple of times a month, we have a retreat coming up at the Garrison Institute in the end of April, the last weekend, on April 28th through 30th.

Rick: It is in the Catskills or someplace...

Lawrence: Garrison Institute is on the Hudson River, beautiful Hudson Valley. And the title of that is Living Through Dying and so it's going to be a retreat on exploring all the ways, both kind of literally how do we live through dying but the various levels that we die. How we die to all the hopes and dreams. How does the ego cope with things and have to die to itself in the spiritual process and literally how do we prepare for death? Because much of our practices in yogic and meditative traditions were also very consciously a preparation for how consciousness moves through death to incarnate once again and ways of understanding the teachings to support that and to open up the

awareness of what the eternal is that never dies. So that retreat living through dying will be at the end of April and then we also have a program titled Awakening Kundalini – The Path to Radical Freedom. So, it's based on the book and that will be a one-day program at the New York Open Center in Manhattan and that's coming up on March 12th.

Rick: And then you are also a therapist of some sort. Right?

Lawrence: Right.

Rick: So you meet with clients, and do you do that like just locally or also over skype?

Lawrence: Well, people come to me locally, but yes, I do a fair amount of skype consultations that opens up all over the globe. So, I work with people from as far away as Australia, New Zealand, Europe and to around the United States who are going through various kinds of processes of spiritual transformation, awakening, challenges and they work with me once or twice, they work with me regularly, whatever suits them they contact me and set that up.

Rick: We have a page in past interviews called categorical index and it attempts to categorize all the people I have interviewed, but we just created a new category called spiritual emergency help because we get so many request for that.

Lawrence: Well, there are spiritual emergence networks, you know people get referred to me through them and I refer people back to those for local resources. There is a spiritual emergency network in Europe, Canada, United States, Australia, and those kinds of resources are on my website – thesoulsjourney.com.

Rick: And then there are others who deal specifically with Kundalini, maybe not so much in terms of emergencies but like Bonnie Greenwell, Joan Harrigan and others. Help is out there. People need it.

Okay. Great. Thanks.

Let me just make some general wrap-up points that I always make. I have been speaking with Lawrence Edwards. And I have a page on BatGap where you can get in touch with him. This is part of an ongoing series of interviews. We will be coming up on 400 next year. And we intend to keep doing this. So, if you would like to be notified of future ones there is a place to sign up to be notified by email. There is also access to audio podcast, there is a link for that on the website if you want to subscribe to that. Check out the different menus. There are some various things and we keep adding to it, so just explore around.

So, thanks for listening or watching. And we will see you for the next one which should be in about a week. Thanks Lawrence.

Lawrence: Thank you Rick. Great talking with you.

Rick: I really appreciate it.

End