

RAM DASS LECTURE
AT THE MARYLAND PSYCHIATRIC
RESEARCH CENTER: PART II

This paper is a transcription (Part II) of a taped lecture given October 10, 1972, at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, Baltimore, Maryland. Ram Dass is the name given to Dr. Richard Alpert by a teacher of yoga in India. Dr. Alpert was formerly a professor of psychology at Harvard-Editor

Ram Dass: It turns out that the universe is lawful-but not a logical law. The law I'm talking about would be called the "divine" law. That is, it's not logical law in the sense that "a" is "a" and not "b." It's the law that includes paradox and all possibility. Within that law of the universe, everything that is in form-whether it is on this physical plane or on any of the other planes I've been talking about-is all perfectly lawful. When we reduce it to our logical analog, which is not an exact analog but similar, we can think in deterministic frameworks. There is no free choice in the deterministic system. That is, if the laws are just running off, they are just running off, and the experience of free choice is merely another run-off of the law. And under those conditions the past, present and future are all perfectly lawfully related to one another.

*lawfulness of
the universe*

Because we are in time, we think that the future has not yet happened. But it's very much like being a character in a book, and you're on page 23 and you don't know what's going to happen on page 24, because you think you're the character in the book. But now imagine you're reading the book-well, you could turn over and find out what happened on page 24. Now imagine you wrote the book. You would already know what happened on page 24. Hinduism and all these dualistic religio-philosophic movements talk about "the One" or the

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"one guru," or *sa/guru*, or however you want to talk about it; Judaism says "The Lord is One," and Jesus says, "My father and I are one." When you go into these traditions, you see that when a being has extricated himself from the attachment I've been talking about-physical, subtle, and all these different vibrational frequency plays-then he and consciousness are the same thing. And of course since it is an interchangeable, there's only one of it. The way in which it keeps manifesting in form or in these different planes and coming down into clouds and then solids-and all this is perfectly *lawful-you* would say in effect, "He is the law." God is the law.

That's the way the word *God* finally comes in, which is a hard one for us. But you could say that's why the Jews were so interested in the law, and what the Ten Commandments were that Moses brought back. Because the universe of form is merely the lawful manifestation of this energy into patterns, and because it is aU lawful-past, present and future-all *are* already. Therefore when you are around this being, my guru, you see that he is no more in the present than in the past or the future, and to him it's all equally available. Often when I'm sitting with him he would look at someone and later in just a little conversation when it just comes out for some karmic reason I don't fully understand, he'll say something about what's going to happen to that guy. In the Tibetan tradition there's like a lama who sends out postcards saying, "Next Thursday at 2:00 I'm leaving my body. I'm going to die. I hope you will come join me." And everybody gathers and at Thursday at 2:00 he turns around three times, he sits down, and he dies. You know that a fully conscious being always knows exactly the moment he's going to die, if he cared. When he is going to "drop his body" is what the expression is-and that really is what it is, dropping the body. It means dying to the physical plane. Ramana Maharshi, very beautiful, had cancer of the arm and he wouldn't have it treated and the devotees said, "Oh Bhagavan-God-take care of your body." And he said, "No, it's finished its work on this plane." They said, "Don't leave us; don't leave us." And he looked at them like he was bewildered, and he said, "Where can I go? Just because you're not going to see me on the plane you're addicted to, do you think I'm going anywhere?"

My experience with my guru over this time is that in five years he has slowly taken me over-which is a hard one for Westerners. Like my father asks me, "Are you getting married?"- because the woman I used to live with is in India with my guru, and he keeps calling her Mrs. Ram Dass. So I say, "I don't know; he hasn't told me yet." My father comes out

of the tradition where you don't ask somebody else if you are going.... "What do you mean, he hasn't told you?" He says, "Don't you make any decisions on your own?" And I say, "No." *No*. Now from our point of view we really think we lost something. In the Christian Bible it's called "Not my will, but Thy will, Oh Lord." Because once you understand-who thought that he was making the decision in the bus to turn right? Once you realize you are not who you thought you were anyway-how long do you want to play out the little melodrama that you think you're doing it all? And if you don't think you're doing it all, and it's still all lawful, you might as well just sit and listen to how it all came out. That's the "Not my will but Thy will." It's what is called *surrender-which* we find so horrible. When we think of the word "surrender" we think of one ego surrendering to another. But if you imagine just surrendering into the law or surrendering the illusion that you are the choice maker. ... The idea is, when you surrender, is the result chaos? Is Freud right? Is the whole idea right that who we are is a wild animal? Or is that just more of the program?

"surrender"

The two concepts that make it all come together-which the East has but the West unfortunately threw out of its religions in the Councils of Nicea, Trent and Constantinople, somewhere between 200 and 600 A.D.-are the ideas of *karma* and *reincarnation*. And that, in effect, says who we are as separate entities: beings who keep incarnating. That is, taking on form in certain vibrational frequencies which we will call the physical plane. Taking birth, in order to work out, to run off certain kinds of attachments, to get finished with attachment. When you finally get finished with attachment the desires that keep making you be born again and again cease, and you become one with "the One." And that is the merging back into the One. From a Zen Buddhist point of view, once you are in the One, there's no one. Of course, you don't see the One-*you* only see the one if you're two. Once you are in the One it's non-dualism.

*karma
and
reincarnation*

Those two models, those two concepts, make an entirely different matter out of what the meaning of what your daily life is about, or what the meaning of human suffering is. Because, once I see me as somebody who has taken on this package in order to carry out certain works of purification, I start to look at the experiences I'm having in life as part of that purification exercise. Then I see this life as a certain necessary kind of work that I am doing. It's the question of what is the meaning of life. But in order to do that, I am no longer using the basic philosophical foundation of the West, which is

*philosophical
materialism
as a set of
assumptions*

philosophical materialism. I don't mean materialism in the sense I want to build a wrist watch. I mean materialism that says we are our human bodies, and when they're gone- Baby, that's it; so get what you can now, because when it's over, it's done. When you look at the world from the viewpoint of philosophical materialism, and you look at the caste system that existed way back in India that's just coming to a decaying end now, you see horrible injustice. When you look at it from the point of view of incarnation, you see it in an entirely different way. In the villages in India, these people are still living "in the spirit." They are not identified with this earth in that way.

*working out of
a different
experiential
base*

Now we in psychology call that a dissociative process, as a defense mechanism to protect one from undue anxiety. I mean, I know that game, too. That's one way of looking at it. That's the way to preserve philosophical materialism, which is a set of assumptions. But when you're working out of a different experiential base, philosophic materialism doesn't seem so valid to you. And once you get into another space, you see that you, in fact, have taken this birth for a certain function and you're just running it off. In those cases the king is doing his *dharma* or his perfect route, in which *his* thing is to be the perfect king; and the sweeper is doing *his* thing, which is to be the perfect sweeper. In the village the sweeper doesn't wish he were king, because the wish to be king is making him other than a perfect sweeper and his work is to run that one through. The king will be the sweeper, and the sweeper will be the king, and so on. Now, from our point of view, you say, "Oh, well, that's all fantasy and projection." But for people who are living in a different space or a different identity with themselves Like the guy I am talking about that I visited in India. He's in a village where they run down the street and they say, "You know what Maharaj-ji just did? he told me this " And they say, "Oh sure, of course but did you hear. " You know, to them it's common fare. In the village I live in everybody says, "Of course that stuff all happens. Nothing big deal about that." Because they are living much closer than we are to the space where all this is possible. For us it's called "miracle" because it doesn't fit in with our existing philosophical conceptual system.

*personality
research and
random error*

Now, reincarnation doesn't have to be linear in the sense of the Bridey Murphy kind of thing. It may well be in terms of past, present, and future all being here simultaneously. There are many ways of thinking of the fifth dimension of infinite repetition and changes and so on. Many ways of thinking of reincarnation. I used to do personality research and we would try

to predict, when a mother and father did a certain thing, how the child would be in terms of Freud's Identification Theory. We were studying resistance to temptation, guilt, internalization of values, and sexual role identity: the four things that are supposedly the manifestation of identification. We would question the parents for many hours. We'd study the child with exquisite instruments, and we'd throw this all into a fantastically complex factor analytic design and we'd usually come out with a correlation, say between 40 and 60. A correlation of .4 means that you've accounted for 16 percent of the variability, which means that 84 percent of the variability hasn't been accounted for. Now we in social science say, "Well, if we could put more variables into the computer ... it's just that it's such a multivariate thing ... we can't predict it from a single variant." Or we say, "Well, we don't have the theory quite right-but almost. And when we do, it will go way up." But that 84 percent that's left we call random error. Or say that we haven't put variables into the machine: that very easily could allow for an number of different possibilities about how it all really is. Like, I don't question at all that my body is related to my heredity through my parental strain, and that my personality is affected by the internalization of values through my relations to my parents and society-my socialization. I don't question that at all. That is the package as far as I am concerned, but that isn't *who I am*.

In effect, from the reincarnation point of view, a person before birth knows exactly what they're buying into. It's not a pig in a poke; they know just what they're buying into. They say, "I'm buying into these parents, this experience. I'm going to be in this life, I'm going to have one eye, I'm going to be a cripple, I'm going to end up being beaten to death on the street in Benares and that's what [need. Okay, here I go!" You dive down in, and the veil is lowered. There you are, and here we are, and we run through this one, and then we get all finished and we come back out of it and we wake up. Okay, you ran that one off; now let's see what's next. What I need to be now is a duke, and I might have to wait thousands of years for that one.

I know I'm pushing you very hard, but I'm just trying to give you a feeling. The game is much more interesting than we thought it was. You begin to see this entire physical plane as a training school. The minute you stop treating all of the experiences that every single being has had which don't fit in with your conceptual model of who you are and how it works as "hallucinations or irrationality or psychosis or deviance," you understand it as, really, information You see, this is the issue: you go from being a decider, a judge. The judge says,

*viewsof
reincarnation
and birth*

*physical
plane as
training
school*

*intellect as
siddhi*

"Will I accept what he is saying or not? He's a very persuasive fellow, but obviously he's taken too many drugs. He's left the realm of. ... " I mean, there's a judging place in all of us. And we are running all these experiences through our logical rational mind, because we think that's a real big deal. From another point of view, as I've told you, there's obviously other ways of knowing. That is considered a *siddhi*, a power. Knowing through the intellect is merely another power. It's like prehensile hands was a big deal earlier, and then cerebral cognizing is another big deal.

*"Tao" and
natural law*

In India, in the yogic tradition, they say, "Look, each thing seems like a big deal, but don't get hooked on it." Instead of saying, "Well, that's a good one-I'm going to use it and control. ... " See, we're interested in control and mastery. We can go to the moon, aren't we great? I can say it, but maybe you can't hear it; I can say from Maharshi's point of view, he *is* the moon. What does he want to go there for? What man has continually done, he's taken each little tool he's been given and used it in order to enhance the power of his own separate entitiness, In fact there is a whole other level where you become part of the process of it all, because you decide your own separate entitiness is merely part of a running off process. You no longer identify yourself as a separate entity. The Chinese philosophy that is most in harmony with that is called *Tao*. It's given in a little tiny book called *Tao Te Ching*, which is probably from the philosopher Lao Tzu. It's just a statement of what the flow is, what the natural law is like. You become more and more like a river. When a river floats down the stream it doesn't say, I must follow the laws of gravity or, Today I think I'll float down the stream. There is no overlay of self-consciousness. We are under the impression that that overlay is what is our saving thing, while actually it turns out it's our losing thing, not our saving thing. It's a short term gain and a long term loss.

*The Way-
gained by
daily loss*

The funny thing about my journey at the moment is-the further I go, the less I think. The *Tao* says the student learns the Way by daily increment-meaning The Way, as when Christ says, "I am the Way." The route, the harmony, is gained by daily loss: loss upon loss until at last comes the Way. When I talk to you about bringing your mind to one-pointedness, for example that time I'm sitting sixteen hours a day following my breath, think of all the books I could be reading, all the knowledge I could be collecting. Is it possible that by bringing my mind to one point I will know all that without knowing I know it but have it available to me? It's like what you're moving toward is the ideal computer program, which is not a

fixed program. It's a totally fluid program. It optimizes all the data that is fed into it in terms of what function is necessary. That would be the ideal program. The program with no program. It's the program that is perfectly in harmony, always with the optimum thing.

We think that if we don't think it's all going to go to hell. What's far out is that you go through a period when you expect it's going to and when it seems to. That's where we need moratoriums: at times when we are shifting programs. Then you come into a place where you think less and less, and more and more happens, and it gets more and more on base brain. It's a bad way of saying it, but roughly that's it. You are empty mote and more of the time, and more and more of the time the perfect thing is happening all the time.

I used to do therapy, and a patient would come in and I had a model of what I thought patients were about. "I'm a doctor; you're a patient." I was a Freudian. I'd been trained in the psychoanalytic institute. I had a model about what psychosexual stages were. I had a whole set of models. The person would say "Bzzz" and that would go into this category in my head and I would say, "Oh, yes." Under Category A I would give Response 3. Now I didn't have it that exact, but it was that kind of a dance. They'd say "My mother bzzz," and I'd write it down, and they could learn when to get the pellet. I mean, we have all seen those research studies showing how each therapist trains his patient to be Rogerian or Freudian, or whatever. Then he says "You're cured," when the patient thinks like the therapist does.

*patients and
therapy
models*

Now imagine that you don't have any model at all in your mind about anything. You don't even have a model that there is a patient or that you are a doctor. Here's an entity that you happen to meet. You could meet him in a bus, you could meet him in bed, you could meet him in the office. Who knows where you are going to meet the next entity? Here we are. And who are we? Who do I see when I look at another human being? Am I focused? Which level is my microscope focused at? Do I see body? Well, if my sexual desires are what I'm attached to, that is what I will see. A beautiful entity goes by and I'll go "Umm." And you know, yourself, when you walk down the street and you're horny or you're sexually lustful, that's all you see. You go by a bakery and you never even notice it. But if you are hungry you notice the bakery and the beautiful whatever-it-is doesn't do a thing to you ... unless it has a roll in its hand. That's the predicament: your desires, your motives, affect your perceptions, as we all know. Now let's

*no therapy
model*

*defining
human being
as essence
instead of as
package*

say you sit and you've trained yourself through the course of your understanding and your own discipline. All the desires are around, I mean, it's all functioning, but it's almost like your oil gauge in your car: when it needs oil, a red light goes on and you give it oil; but you don't have to be your oil gauge. The oil gauge is just doing its thing; the gas thing is doing its thing; everything is doing its thing, and you're just here. When I look at another person, I see body and then I see personality or hear personality or see that level. Tune a little deeper, there's personality. Now tune one more, and here we are. Here we are *sitting*. It's like you're sitting inside that package and I'm sitting inside this package. "You in there?" "Yeah, I'm here!" But the way it comes out is through personality, and it comes out through body, and it comes out through the whole packaging process. The predicament is, do you define another human being as their package, or as their essence?

*essence and
individual
differences*

Now if you look through different levels of essence you can get essences which are still individual differences. There are astral differences which is what astrology is about, as opposed to the MMPI, which is personality. Astrology is the MMPI of the next plane out. Like the Rorschach, you can keep looking, keep tuning, and go behind that one, behind that one and behind that one, till you come to the place where you are looking yourself in the eye. Because behind all individual differences there turns out to be only *one* of us. From my point of view at this moment there are, at the most, only two beings left in the universe. And much of the time there only seems to be One. But of the two that are left, one is who I still think I am, and God, or It All.

*attachment
to this plane*

Everybody I meet is a teaching that has come to me. The reason I even see other beings is because of desires that I am still attached to, including this whole plane right here. The thing that collects us together is that we all have desires that involve this particular vibrational space. We all got born into this one, and, with very few exceptions, like the kind of guy I hang out with in India, most of us think that must be what reality is. It's like a group of people that are in a training school but who have never been outside the walls. It's like Plato's metaphor of the cave. All these beings are chained in the cave, and they have been chained so long that they have only seen the fire reflections on the opposite side of the cave, and they build a whole culture about that. And then one of the guys gets free at one moment and he goes out the door of the cave and he sees the sun and trees and all and he comes rushing back and he says, "Fellas, I hate to tell you, but ... " and they stone him to death. That's what Plato points out. They stone him to death

*Plato's metaphor
of the cave*

because they don't want to know. They don't want to upset the apple cart because it's too good. They're getting the payoff. They are getting the points. They are getting the reward. They are still attached to fulfilling their desires in time even though the relation of suffering and time hasn't dawned on them. That happens to people when they are getting ready to die. Then suddenly all their money and all their attachments and all their position and all the beauty all seems like so much, in Thurber's terms, "slish." It's just stuff. It's suddenly stuff and now they are going to face this thing and they don't understand. And for many of us, we saw the "slish" a little earlier than the moment before we are going to die.

*suffering
and
time*

What is happening in the Western culture which is really awesome is that because of technology-not in spite of technology, because of technology-the limits of our rational mind are becoming more apparent sooner. And the limits of what we can take in terms of total fulfillment from the external world is becoming apparent earlier and earlier and earlier. A kid twelve years old has already 'H'riously run off, say, two hundred adult roles through television. He's already gone to the moon, he's already been a lawyer, he has already been the police chief of Los Angeles, he has already been a spy for the C.I.A. So you say, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" and the whole question is like an old fashioned question, like, "What are you talking about?" He's gotten to the point where he is just right here now. He doesn't want to be anything. He's run out of them. He sees all those aren't what it's going to be either. He can look at the President and he can look at Frank Sinatra and he can look at all the boys that made it in the culture and say "Oh-oh, boy ... I don't want that-whatever that is, like that isn't quite right." And the sexual mores change so that he doesn't have to wait till he is thirty years old to have his first sexual experience. By the time he is fifteen he can often have finished the whole business. The game is changing, and the frequency of the use of marijuana and all this stuff means he is already playing with this loosening of his consciousness, and he has already been on other planes. So now, what is this being? Who is this? What happened? This is all out of technology, by the way. This is all out of the cultural philosophy of "More is Better." We have collected more and more, and more and more, and the dawning thing is that more is never enough.

*technology and
the limits of
rational
mind*

*the changing
game*

*cultural
philosophy of
"more is better"*

Despair is what motivates the next step. That is what we are talking about now. When man finishes being totally enamored of his power, of his intellect, and he can buy or control or master or get anything he wants and still ... this is the "world of the gods." I can be a god and still be Ram Dass, or Richard

*prerequisite for
turning back
inward*

Alpert, or whoever I was. I can know it and control it and can master it. Then comes the dawning thing-that it is all ephemeral. It's all ephemeral, and it isn't enough even when we get it. We've had wise men and sages-not so much in the West-but we have had beings who were totally fulfilled beings, and they have a certain vibrational space, and when you are around them you feel great peace. Certainly if great peace was contingent on the acquiring of things, we would expect the most beautiful, the *most* powerful and the most successful beings in society to show that great peace. Well, usually they are an example of the people who least show it. Then there comes a despair which is an absolute prerequisite *for* the whole trip: the despair that knows that how you thought you would make it, isn't going to make it. That despair is a prerequisite to turn back inward, and turning back inward starts you to go for the next level, and that is roughly what many of us are now doing. Some of us do it in our spare time; some of us do it on Sunday morning or Saturday night; some of us try to build it into our work; some of us say, "Well, I can do nothing but just go the whole trip and see what happens."

*therapy in
terms of who
the therapist is*

It's very extraordinary for me as a psychologist to have let loose of so many models of how I thought it had to be. When a person walks in and sits down with me now, they come and they say, "My problem is brrr ... and I'm suffering.... " They get all done, and I'm looking right into their eyes-because the eyes are the windows of the soul-and I'm looking right through all that stuff. When they get all done, I say, "Right. I hear all that, and here we are. You're telling me about your melodrama, but that isn't who you are. 'Cause I can see, it's just stuff. It's like you are telling me about the paint job on your new Cadillac convertible." I really see therapy, in terms of personality, as body and repair work. But it has nothing to do with essence. Essence means that the therapist has to know who he or she is, because the therapy will be just as high as the therapist. A therapist who thinks he is a therapist can only create a patient who thinks he is a patient. A therapist who thinks he is a personality can merely exchange one personality package for another personality package. He can't even imagine that there is a way of being that has nothing to do with personality. Like, from a personality point of view, a lot of my pathology isn't over. When I left analysis my analyst said, "You are too sick to function in society." That was in 1958, and he may well have been right. I've been just barely holding on ever since. The stuff is still around, but it is just stuff, just stuff, just stuff.

Now I will give you a little insight as to how I am playing this game. AU this time I have been talking to you, all morning

long, have I been identified with myself as the speaker? The far out thing is, I'm not. I'm just sitting inside here and this whole thing is happening. I walked in here totally empty-minded; I had nothing I had to say to you. How am I going to collect points? Am I going to have you all say, "Very interesting"? Am I going to take it home and count it, put it in a scrapbook? "They were very appreciative down at ... very wonderful" -big deal, so what? I'm doing this, 'cause this is what I do, 'cause this is what I do-like a shoemaker makes shoes. And what you get out of it is your current predicament. That has nothing to do with me. I'm doing this as my work on myself. I have no sense of social responsibility. None whatsoever, because that's just another attachment. I have no desire to do good. As I get freer of attachment, I *am* good. The Ten Commandments you can look at like, "Don't strike me dead." You can follow them out of fear, or you can get to the point where you understand that they are describing how the universe works. And you, in effect, *become* the laws, the Ten Commandments. You don't follow them, you *are* them. Like, if I'm not attached to my separate body and personality, how can I steal from you? Who am I stealing from? I have to think, "I need something." It's like one hand stealing from another.

*"sitting
inside"*

*The Ten
Commandments*

I have been having this interesting deal. This book, *Be Here Now*, has sold many, many, copies and this community that did the art work and so on-they were the publishers-got about 40 cents on every book. So suddenly they are sitting with \$150,000 and money is corrupting them, and they are all getting So I went to the distributor, and I said "Look, let's change the whole game and reduce the price, and everybody cut out profit. ... " So, I'm working out to arrange to reduce the price, and I go to my father who is a very wealthy Republican from Boston with a big estate, and he says to me, "Well, what are you against, capitalism?" I said, "No, I'm not against capitalism. I think it's wonderful. I'm happy you are a capitalist and you are enjoying it, and it's wonderful. I'm happy I do what I do and I don't want to change you. If there is more of you than me, then we have to play by your rules when we are in that certain space. If there is more of me than you, then you have to play by the other rules. That's the way the game is-you know, it's all a process." So, he said, "I don't understand why you are cutting the price when it's a best seller. Everybody is willing to buy it. You could take the money and you could do good with it." I said, "Well, why can I do more good than the persons who put up the money? Tell me something-you're a lawyer-you just tried a case for your brother-in-law, didn't you?" "Yeah:" I said, "Did you charge him a big fee?" "Of course not." "What did you charge him?" "I charged him my expenses:" "Why didn't you charge him a big fee? You charge

Be Here Now

*"everybody's
myfamily"*

everybody else big fees." He says, "He's my brother-in-law." I said, "Well, that's my predicament. Everybody is my family am I going to do?"

*thinking mind
based on
subject-object*

The thinking mind is based on subject-object, so when you look at another human being including yourself, you see the other being as her or him, or them. When you are less and less attached to separateness, you experience it all more as us, or as one. Since the experience determines your action, you no longer can act in a way that's based on optimizing the position of the individual, because you see that is just accruing more problems. The only instructions that I function under now in the world are the instructions from my guru, which seem very simple and kind of Mickey Mouse from a Western, sophisticated point of view: to love everyone, and serve everyone, and remember God. Those are my instructions. But remembering God is all of this I've been talking about-*v*that's what this is all about.

*instructions
from the guru*

*living in
the Spirit*

We may have a hard time with words like God and the Spirit, but that's what these issues really revolve around. This is where finally these huge institutions like religion and science and philosophy start to find their way into the space where you are no longer attached to the More, or to the Separate. This is what is commonly known in the religious tradition as "living in the spirit." When you are living in the spirit it *aU*looks different to you. Living in communion or harmony with your universe as man-in-nature, you see the thing that keeps you from living in the spirit all the time. The incredible thing is that the true power of the Universe you can *be* but cannot have. When Christ said, "Had ye but faith, you could move mountains," he was speaking literal truth. But, were you able to move mountains, you wouldn't be you anymore; you would be the Being who created the mountain in the first place. There is only one Being. And at some level equally as real as this physical plane, there is only one of us, and at another plane there aren't any of us.

*the route of
the heart*

My route is the route of the heart or of devotion. That is a path. There are many pathways through here. One is the path of wisdom, one is the path of calming the mind, one is the path of opening the heart. My path is the path of love.

*three levels
of love*

Gurdjieff talks about three levels of Love. There's physiological, biochemical Love-"Let's make love." There is romantic love, which is personality love-loving an object-which has in it jealousy and hate and possession and all the psychodynamics of what we usually think of as personality

and romantic poetry and so on. Then there is a third thing called conscious love. That is where you enter into the space which we previously called energy, and then consciousness. Another identity to those two identities is the word "love," where you in effect become love: not "loving" as a verb, but "are love." A being around you experiences you vibrationally ... when they are open When you say, "I fell in love with so and so, I'm in love with so and so," what you are really saying is, "They are a key stimulus which is an innate releasing mechanism to the place in me where I am love." And in effect when I live in the place where I am love, everybody I look at is my lover. So far out, as you can imagine. That doesn't demand you do anything about it. We're all right here in love. And when you meet another being, to the extent they are ready, they resonate right in that place; it's like a harmonic resonance. They resonate in the place where they are, in that place which is always ready in everybody but usually covered over with so much paranoia, where they also are love-not are loving, but *are love*. Suddenly here we are in the ocean of love which is what Christ's love was about. That love has no possessiveness. What am I going to collect-your body? Very scary. I'm going to collect you in time and space? I don't need to collect it, because I am it. Part of the illusion we are born into is a resultant internalization of negative "takes" which become part of our ego structure and which lead into a "take" of ourselves-which does not allow us to honor and taste of our own divinity, our own beauty, our own love, our own presence.

The minute you can look at another being and just focus right in on that place and let all the rest of the stuff be stuff-blowing by-then as fast as that person brings it up (snaps fingers), it's gone. It's what is known as the "mirror phenomenon." A guru, or a conscious being, is a pure mirror for another being. It's not feeding back theory. It's just mirror. It's just empty. When I sit talking to you now, I am doing mantra. Inside, ever since I sat down here has been going RAMMMM, RAMMMM. You see, my name is Ram Dass, Dass means servant; Ram is one of the incarnations of God. I am a servant of God-not my will, but Thy will. That name is a training device for me. My guru said, "Now you are no longer Richard Alpert, now you are Ram Dass." When he talks to me, he says "Ram Dass," then he says something to me; and I realize he is not talking to who I think I am, he is talking to who I would be, would I stop thinking I was "somebody." And when I said to him, "It's going to be scary going back to America," he says, "You shouldn't fear anything." I said, "All I fear is my own impurities," Because, as I said, when you are sexy you see sex, when you are hungry you see food. You can only see your own impurities, anyway. The

*guru as
pure
mirror*

*a training
device*

*the game of
individual
differences*

universe is the projection of your desires. So he came and he looked me up and down and he said, "I don't see any impurities." I thought, What, is he putting me on? And then I realized, No-from where he is looking, there aren't any.

We have been trained from the beginning in individual differences, and the reason we as an intellectual community are gathered together is because we are all masters at the game of individual differences. We can categorize, and analyze and compartmentalize better than practically anybody else in society. That's why we are sitting in this building at this moment. And it's great to have that as your servant. If that is your master, you're trapped. Behind it all, here "I" am. Here "We" are. Here "It" is.

QUESTIONS

Audience: How did we get so attached in the first place, or why?

*religion and
unanswerable
questions*

Ram Dass: You are not the first to have asked that question. It always boils down to that question. I have really nothing but a cop-out answer for that. I mean not a clear answer because, just as I said, ultimately the laws of the universe are not rationally knowable, because they are not within the logical rational system, since that is a subsystem, and there is a meta-system of which that's all part, which includes paradox and opposites. Almost every religion ultimately says, "That question cannot be asked or answered." Like in Judaism there is a statement, "In the beginning," and they say that of **an**the things the Talmudic scholar can study-the scholar of Torah-that is the one thing that a teacher cannot teach him, nor can a book help him with. He can only know that through meditation you go inward to the place where you *are* the answer, but you don't know the answer. In other words, Buddha's answer in very gross terms is, "It's none of our business"-our business in the sense of the person who asks and answers questions.

I can give you hundreds of answers that have been given by religions around the world to that question. Why did it all begin? Why is there Suffering? Why did it go from the zero into the one into the many? You know, in some systems it is cyclical. It's just going, and going, going, from the zero to the one to the many, back to the one, back to the zero, and on and on and on and on. From another place, nothing is happening,

because it is all still in time. And a few levels out you are not in time anymore, and then it always has been and it always was and it always will be, and nothing has happened yet. I mean there are so many game levels to answer that from, and my answer is that at the level I am at, I just don't know. I don't know. It doesn't mean it isn't knowable; it's just that I don't know it. That's the only way I can deal with your question. It's always the question you are finally forced to. So why did it all begin? What's it all about?

It's just like the meaning of suffering. There is a certain stage where you are trying to avoid suffering, and you are afraid of death. So your whole philosophy in life is built on the fear of suffering and the fear of death. Then you get to a place where you have seen a little more, and you are not so afraid of death. You're sort of mildly curious about it. Then you get to a place where you start to see that suffering is purification: it's like the fire that gets you straight. It's like a prerequisite for this work. And then at that point suffering takes on a whole new meaning for you and you have a whole new way of looking at the universe. Like I was just with this boy, 23 years old, who was dying of Hodgkins Disease out in California, and he and I were talking about his impending death and preparation for it. Very calm, right here. I could see that the people around him were saying, "Isn't it terrible that a person so young should die?" But I don't feel that at all. My feeling is, how do I know when a person has finished their work? I don't know what their work is. It would only be my fear of death that would make me want to keep that person alive, longer and longer and longer. Otherwise I would just want to hear how it came out. I'm not attached. Imagine that this is a training program, a training school-and it's not even a very exciting training school-it's one of the lower-level ones. Suppose a person has very little to do, and they can do it in about three years. So they come and they do it in three years, and at the end of three years they start to die of meningitis or whooping cough. And we say, "What kind of God could that be, that is taking that child from us now?" Well, that person, that being, has finished its work. That's a whole different philosophical place from the place at which the person is moaning. Job in the Bible is a perfect example of this. "What are you doing to me, God?" God in effect could have answered, "Because you are my chosen." You're my chosen. Because suffering purifies. You get to the point like, when I suffer, I don't choose to suffer-I'm not a masochist-but when I suffer, I am working with it rather than suffering. I am seeing the suffering. And as this philosophical position keeps changing, as you keep evolving in these positions, the answer to that question you ask keeps changing and

*the meaning
of suffering*

*suffering
and death*

*working with
suffering*

the reason for asking the question keeps changing. At one point it's a burden, then the next moment it's a joy, then the next moment it's nothing.

Audience: What do you know about the higher levels of training ... like in death? Our life is just one level of training. What do you know about the other levels?

*three ways
of knowing
about higher
levels of
training*

Ram Dass: There are three ways in which you know things. One is you know them through direct experience. One is you know them because somebody you know knows them, and *tells* you. And one of them is you study them with your logical mind which extrapolates outward. My predicament is that there have been many, many experiences that I've had which are not conceptually organized—they are like pieces of puzzles that are all hanging around. Then when I read something, or I'm with somebody who I trust, like this being I know in India, and he says something—because of the little pieces of puzzle in my being, what he says has an inner validity to me that says, "Yeah, right on." While somebody else that doesn't have those little pieces of puzzle would say, "Well, I don't know; that's just his position." You see? And in a way, a lot of what I know about all this stuff comes through being around these kinds of beings and through my readings of what are called the sacred books of the world, which are descriptions by various mystics and saints of the states and the work on other planes of consciousness, which comes through things like Theosophists and the Buddhist tradition and the Christian mystics like John and Theresa and so on, the Eastern mystics, Eastern Greek Orthodox Christians, the Sufi tradition, the mystics of Moslem tradition, and a lot of Egyptian writings which are concerned with things like this—with the preparation and training of sages, and higher and higher planes. But when I read this stuff—some of it, I read and it just goes by me, 'cause it's not relevant, I'm not ready for it, or I don't have the pieces of the puzzle to make it fit together. But other stuff, "Yeah, right on."

*sacred books
of the world
and concept
of other
planes of
consciousness*

Now in answer to your question based on that kind of thing. There are certain attachments that an individual has which can only be worked out or realized on the physical plane. That is, they have to actually take a physical birth to work through that attachment. Working through an attachment means you have to work with that desire until you are no longer attached to that desire. The desire may go on, but you are not attached to it. Some work can be done on other planes, which are different vibrational spaces where beings have other kinds of qualities to them. That is, there are certain planes where beings can take on bodies at will—whatever body they need for certain work.

There are bodies made of light; there are all these different astral planes. Some of it is described, for example, in books like Yogananda's book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*. A lot of the Theosophists have described these. Leadbeater has an exquisite description of these different planes. What generally happens to an individual depends on where his consciousness is at the moment of death. At the moment of death, if the person is holding to life--versus Gandhi for example ... the moment he's shot Probably when somebody is shot they go "Umph!" or "Don't blame them," or "Goodbye;" or something. Gandhi is shot--he comes out of his back yard and he is shot with four bullets--and as he is toppling over he says, "Ram," the name of God. He just goes out, right? He's so ready to go, he's got his bag packed and by the door. He's just come out to give a press conference--but he is so ready to go that he gets shot and he doesn't say, I should remember "Ram"--he just goes, "Ram." Well, now that kind of being is in a different predicament when they drop their body than another being who thought they *were* their body. Because most beings who thought they were their body, when they die they enter into a space which is called purgatory in Christianity. It's kind of a floating in space, full of confusion--cutting confusion. Because you can't imagine that you are still around and that you aren't who you thought you were. You haven't been prepared with a lecture like this, you know, to say, "Oh, right, that's what that was about." I mean you are not in that position. There is a horror to that moment--it's just absolute total confused panic.

*importance of
consciousness
at the moment
of death*

The Tibetan Buddhist's preparation for people dying is very interesting, because that describes seven planes. Seven turns out to be a very hip number in the melodrama. What they say to the person they are preparing for death is, "When you go out, the first thing you are going to experience, the first place you are going to be, is this--if you are free enough to be able to be in that space, which is where you don't exist any more. It's just merging ... that's *it*, you've done it; you are finished." **If** on the other hand you blow that one, because you are too confused or too frightened or you're holding on to it too much, you then come into the next plane. If you are too frightened and it's too much for you, you come into the next plane. Try to stay there. If you can't make it there, you come into this one. And they bring you down through seven planes, and finally the one where you take rebirth, on this plane. And they prepare you for all these different planes. Just like when a Japanese person is dying--if they know they are going to die--they put a screen in front of them which has Buddha and the pure land. It's like a ticket, like a railway ticket to the next place. They say, "Okay, you are ready to go--this is where you are going to go. Just keep

*preparation
for dying*

it in mind, and whatever you see on the way through, don't stop, don't buy from beggars off the street-just keep going." Now, the only beggars off the street, you see, are desires you still have.

*desire in the
subtle bodies*

What in effect is happening is that most of the desires we have do not need physical bodies to satisfy; only a few of them do. There are many that are satisfied in much more subtle bodies: thought and feeling levels, feelings of love, desires to be loved, things like that. To be separate and loved-that one is a really deep one. Well, you could sit and be separate and loved without a body On the astral plane like for about 500,000 years. But time is a different concept in those spaces than in this. When you finish this plane, you look at this whole thing, and sixty years seems like that (snaps fingers). It's almost like you decided, Well, I think I will think about this for an hour; okay, that was interesting. But even when you are in the middle of it, it seems like it's as long as it is, but you notice as you get older how it goes faster and faster. You are getting into a different space regarding time, and from one level out this whole thing is like that (snaps fingers), or eternal, depending on how far in you get. Nirvana-the place between the seventeen trillion mind moments-is eternal. You can be there for eternity.

*time and
subtle planes*

*subtle planes
as realms
created by
desires*

There is a kind of a horrible, beautiful description in a book by Ruth Montgomery about a fellow by the name of Ford. Ford was a medium, and he died and then he used Ruth Montgomery to type out some reports from the other *side*. Now most of us in Western science, we treat that stuff like, you know, pretty mushy, soft stuff. But from where I am looking at it, it's all straight, that's all real communication, it's really happening. But Ford himself had many desires. And so he is living in a realm created by his desires. See, as you get farther out you become more conscious that mind creates matter, and you see that you keep creating the universe around you-just as I said when you are hungry you walk down the street and bakeries are suddenly the dominant thing, and grocery stores, while otherwise you walk down and you don't even notice they exist. Your desires *create* your universe. Well, it becomes more and more apparent on these astral planes. What we call heaven, which turns out to be hell, also-the United States is getting more like that all the time-is a space where you can get whatever you want. And then it isn't enough, of course, but you can get whatever you want. The gods can have whatever they want. But whatever you can have and want isn't what it all is, except the final peace, and that doesn't come from getting it, but from being it. You can't "get" peace, just like you can't "get" wisdom, but you can be wise. You can "get" knowledge

*creating the
universe
around you*

*"heaven"
and
"hell"*

but you can only *be* wise-those are two different spaces entirely.

So, most beings go through a very confusing period, and then, in effect, they are guided or trained in the same way that we are being guided and trained-but most of us don't realize we are being guided. The awakening is to the realization that you are in fact being guided. That's why I say there is only two of us, for me. There's me and God. The whole dance of my life is the training in which the universe is teaching me things which are bringing me towards the One. It's like the guru has me on a hook, like a trout, and he's just bringing me in-slowly-and I'm going through all these different experiences while I think I'm rushing this way and rushing that way. But slowly the thing is being brought in and everything that's happening to me is part of my liberation. Almost all saints say, When you finally see, you see it all for the good. Like a doctor just came up to me and he said, "If these saints are all so high, why don't they relieve human suffering instead of sitting around? Why don't they do something?" And I say, "Well, you've got to understand what they understand before you can ask why they do what they do. To relieve one kind of suffering is increasing human illusion. You have got to understand. You can't judge another person till you know what they know. Because they may know more than you know about why it is that way. All you can do is purify yourself, instead of judging others."

*confusion,
awakening
and guidance*

*judgment
and
purification*

Beings only go through that confusion state if they are not prepared. If they are prepared, they immediately go to where their next work is, whatever plane it is. That is, a person that is fully prepared will go out and immediately may take another birth-right away. Somebody else may wallow in this place for a long time until they are guided into some other space where they have their next work to do, and then they do that for another lifetime and another plane, and then they might come back to a human birth. They may go through these dances. There are other beings who don't have to take births anymore. They are just running through a very subtle kind of karmic process, running off on planes of pure thought. They aren't even manifest in forms at all, nor emotion. That's Plato's Absolute: the idea of Pure Idea.

*beings and
different
planes*

The thing is that you can tune yourself. Various saints tune to different planes and they meet various beings-like some people meet poltergeists and ghosts. Those are beings on very low planes, some of whom are still confused and trying to get back into a physical body. They are trying to take people over, and trying to possess people and all the stuff that we call

*low
planes*

*possession
as/unction
of desire*

possession. But you can only be possessed if you have desires of your own. That is, if you want power. Somebody comes along and says, "Look, I will give you power, the power of being somebody outside of the physical body, if you will let me use your body." There is all this weird stuff that goes on, which somebody that is pure and seeking for God never even notices. That's aUirrelevant. It's just like you walk down the street and there are a lot of pickpockets, hustlers and all that; but if you are going somewhere you don't even notice them. They are just all beings, and you don't get caught in them. While if you're looking to hustle somebody, you suddenly notice all the other hustlers around. It's like my teacher used to say to me, "You know, when a pickpocket meets a saint, all he sees are his pockets. He never even sees the saint."

*higher
subtle
planes*

All these different beings on these lower planes are just like us, except they don't have a physical body. That's really what it boils down to. Now then, there are these higher places which in the literature are called heavens and the lower ones are called hells. These are our *labels* for these different vibrational spaces where beings are doing different kinds of work. Through your meditation or a certain mantra you may tune to a certain plane where you meet a being who is "The Lord in Heaven" and you say, "Wow, I've met the Lord in Heaven!" The Lord in Heaven is just another being who is running off its karma on that plane. It happens to be the Lord of Heaven-that round. Just like you might go to the White House and meet Nixon, who is the Lord of Earth or whatever you want to call that. I mean, it's the same sort of trip. All the heavens and hells, they are all just more of these planes. Behind all of that is Thought or Law, and behind all *that-Isn't*. Or Is, but unmanifest. There is unmanifest and manifest and it's all right here now. It's all right here. It's not there. It's all here. There are some beings who are on higher planes, and then they choose to take a human birth because their work on that higher plane involves some run-off that can be best done on this plane. But it's not like we do it-where we go unconsciously into the birth. They consciously do it-like Christ; like Jesus.

*running off
karma on
subtle planes*

See, Jesus is the son of God in the sense that it's an astral being who takes a physical form in order to do a certain kind of work. What blows our mind is things like the Immaculate Conception and all that stuff-like how could that be? How could somebody go without water or food? We don't understand it. We can't handle any of that stuff, so we say, "Well, it's just lousy reporting; that's really what it boils down to." When, in fact, beings from these planes do manifest-what we call a guru like the man I deal with who is called a guru, who is sitting with

a blanket in India-that's a doorway. But that isn't *who he is*. When I go through that one, through my meditation, I meet another being who may not be shaped that way; he may just be a certain feeling or presence: that's another doorway. And each one *of these-it's* like Chinese boxes, you just keep opening this and there is another one-you open this and there's another one-you open this and there's another one and when you finally open the last one-there you are. That's far out-there you are.

*subtleplanes
as Chinese boxes*

And so the guru is merely another method, and you don't get hung up on the guru on the physical plane, because that's another trip. That's just like meditation or mantra or chanting, or anything else. Just another trip. And he knows he isn't that. Well, he doesn't really know anything. You're busy rubbing the feet of this thing, and you suddenly realize you are like rubbing the feet *of* a dog. He couldn't care less if you rub his feet or not, and all the time he is saying "Oh, it's so wonderful to have you rub my feet." And you're feeling, Aren't I good to be rubbing his feet? Then you suddenly think, I've been had-how do you like that? He took me again. So you go and you sit down. You just go in and you're empty, and you just focus here on the guru, and suddenly you meet him in another place and you get all razzle-dazzled-and you've met him on the astral plane, and it's all groovy-and then suddenly you realize you've been had again. Your fascination and your excitement and bliss and all makes you cling to these planes. Most beings cling to one plane or another. So when they die they just land on one plane or another, still clinging, doing their work. A fully conscious being when he leaves his body, leaves his body the same way that you'll take your next breath. With no more melodrama than that. And when they leave their body, that's it. They just-they leave-they're just done.

*guru as
another
method*

*fascination,
excitement
bliss,and
clinging*

So part of our work is working with dying people. That's why my major reflections these days have been concerned with the development of a center for dying. That is, a place where beings in this culture could come to die consciously: to be surrounded by people who themselves are not afraid of dying, and who will provide an environment for them where there isn't a total denial of death and only other people who are afraid of dying. What it's coming to now is a service for people-including training seminars for the families of those that are dying, to get them ready to be with the person consciously at the time of death-and an exploration of various kinds of anesthetics to relieve pain but not wipe out consciousness, so the person can be very conscious just at the moment. Because the training for dying is exactly what the

*centers/or
dying
consciously*

*the
intellectual
trap*

training for living is. It's a training to be right here now-"Now right here"- "Now right here." Like Aldous Huxley when he died. He took LSD. His wife gave him LSD and he sat and he said, "Now I don't feel any more feelings in my legs ... now I don't feel any more feelings in my thighs ... the thigh is gone ... " and things like that. He just slowly left his body-just mildly curious. That's the intellectual trap. So he'll have another million years on a plane where he can satisfy all his curiosity. Just another subtle one. Because ultimately you are not even curious-you're just taking the next breath, which is what all of us should be doing now. Every moment is our moment of birth and our moment of death, and here we are, and okay-now what? Now what? And now what? That's the optimum way for that transformation. It's just a transformation of energy. Nothing more or less than that.

*LSD research
and
psychological
death*

But if you think you are more than energy, you're going to be frightened. Because you think you've got something to lose. That's why I think the LSD research here in this place is really one of the major breakthroughs in this culture. As far as I am concerned, this is allowing people to psychologically die prior to physical death, which gives them a chance to experience the dissolution of ego, up to a certain point. The thing is that with a drug you are overriding desire. Those desires stay in subtle forms, and those subtle forms determine the future incarnation. So you are not shortening the trip, you are merely optimizing the use of this life. But, you know, in a way you are going through it-it's your karma to be in this Center and be a terminal cancer patient and be dying here-I mean, that's your karmic predicament.

Audience: You talked about letting go-or working through desires or attachments. Can you talk about that a little more? You seemed to pick up on that again just now.

*workingthrough
desiresor
attachments*

Ram Dass: You can't actually rip away an attachment, because that's an attachment too. Attachments fall away like a snake moults its skin-that's really much more of an apt analogy to it. But what you feel, your experience, your doing, is just the subjective experience that you are doing anything since there is actually no doer doing anything. The subjective experience of doing something is that you confront some desire. A certain amount of wisdom makes you see that you aren't that desire. And wisdom starts to dislodge it just a little bit. Meditation, or bringing the mind to one point dislodges it a little more, because for moments you are free of it.

*confronting
your desires*

Now, there are various strategies for how to work with a desire. One is to not do the thing that the desire is connected with.

Like my guru put a cup of tea in front of me, and said to me, "Do you want it?" I'd say, "Yeah." He'd say, "Then don't drink it." Now that's a very fierce strategy. See, the predicament is that you might spend the next five hours wanting that cup of tea. That's what celibacy usually is in the church. They are busy not having sex. "I can not have sex for another day. I know I can get through it. I'm not going to think of sex...." You can't *not* think of a rhinoceros the minute somebody tells you "Don't think about a rhinoceros." You can try to stop something prematurely, but in a way you are just feeding it. You are feeding the reality of it by the preoccupation. So the optimum strategy under those conditions seems to be to do whatever the thing is, but remain as much as possible in the state of the *Witness-which* in defense mechanism terms would be called dissociation. But it isn't dissociation out of anxiety. It's dissociation out of growth. So it isn't a defense mechanism. It's-you take on a place. You find the "I" in you.

one strategy

*optimum
strategy of
the Witness*

I used to be obsessed with root beer. You see, I have things like root beer and pizza-which you know are just not yoga food. So I sit up in my room and I say, "Okay, I'm just going to sit," and it's so beautiful. And suddenly the next moment I'd be at the refrigerator and I'd have a bottle of root beer tilted back and I'd be drinking it. Then the first thing I'd say is, "Damn it, I broke down again-I'm no good," And then another voice within me would say, "Drinking root beer-and putting himself down for drinking root beer." In other words there was another voice in me which has no judgment-it couldn't care less whether I drink root beer or not-it's merely noticing what is going on. It's a completely dispassionate witness-not a judge. It's not the superego. It's not saying, "You'll never make a good yogi because you're bad." It's saying, "There you are-there's that and there's that and there's that." Well, what happens in the course of the development of this wisdom is that you are spending more and more time being that part of yourself, rather than the rest of it. So you say, "Ah, there's the desire to achieve, or there's the desire for power, or there's that desire, or there's that one running off. It's like a subliminal flicker thing. You're doing something out of a desire that's taking you over, and then there's a moment when you see what you are doing, which is usually followed by a judgmental moment. But then you witness the judgment, and you keep going through these little flickering things with the desires that you're not ready to stop because there's too much force in them still.

*the non-
judgmental
witness*

Certain desires have more force than others. Ones that are connected with survival and reproduction of the species obviously are going to have the most built into them-like sex and

food, mother instincts and so on. They are really deep and powerful, but you develop more and more of this Witness, just like subliminal information stuff. First it comes in once every ten units-.a moment where you just see it-then *it's* two out of ten, till pretty soon it's there more and more times. Just like today, Jam resting inside watching this speaking and watching this listening, not particularly being identified with the speaker or with the listeners. There is just this process going on, and I'm watching it. Like if somebody comes in and they sit down and they look like they're thinking, "Well, I'll listen to him, but I won't believe it"-you know, that's a very reasonable thing in a place like this. Then you see that something happens-the mouth softens just a little bit, see, "Oh, that's interesting" -and then later on you see a smile. Now, to the extent that there is ego in you, you can say, "See, watch. (Snaps fingers) Look-igor another one." But when I see that, and when I see that reaction in me, I see both of those things and I say, "Yeah, right, *that's* the way the universe is. That's nature, running off."

*desire
to be loved
and
tantric
sexuality*

There is still a place in this personality that wants to be loved. It isn't who I am, but this personality has its own independent life; it's doing its trip. Well, slowly you become more and more of the witness, and as you are doing that you are feeding these things less and less. It's like if you ever tried to make love and stayed conscious through the whole act of making is what tantric sexuality is about-you'll find it is really quite difficult if not impossible for almost everybody, because you get lost into being the experiencer of the sensual pleasure. And as you get lost in the experience, you've lost the witness.

*the witness
rather than
the enjoyer*

There is a Buddhist meditation for eating which is really far out. You put food in front of you, and when you reach for the spoon, you say. "Reaching, reaching." You say each thing twice: "Lifting, lifting; placing, placing." You're saying this to yourself. "Chewing, chewing; tasting, tasting; savoring, savoring; swallowing, swallowing; digesting, digesting; reaching, reaching; lifting, lifting." By the time you are half way through the meal you've got the screaming meemies, The enjoyer of the food has been destroyed by that. Now if you try doing that for about a year, the whole meaning of going to a meal changes considerably. I'll tell you. Because you have become the witness of the whole process rather than the enjoyer of it. Right?

*investing in
something
we enjoy*

You can't rip yourself from being the enjoyer prematurely. but there is a point where it starts to fall away. For most of us, we invest in something that we enjoy, and when it starts to fall away we get upset, because we previously thought it was

something. Like I worked hard to get my pilot's license in order to buy an airplane. Then I got to the point where you go up for four hours and then you go straight-you come down, you go to the toilet-you get a milk shake-you fill up with gas-you sit for four hours-you come down. Big deal, you know? So who needs that? But I paid \$7,000 for the plane and it's taken me hundreds of hours to get my license. And it takes me a long time before I can afford to realize that I have used up the thing. The thing is that we keep using up things but we can't let them go. When we have another way of looking at it, we're really ready to let go very quickly of a lot of them. But others. we still think we are going to get our rush from them, see, particularly ones like sex and eating and stuff like that. To bring those under consciousness you can only edge up on them-sort of around the corner with a little bit of witnessing, you know-that's the way you deal with desires. Then as they are ready, and as your wisdom gets great and your mind gets calmer and your purification gets deeper, it falls away-it keeps falling away and falling away and falling away.

*"falling
away"*

For example, I told you my own instructions at this moment are love, serve, and remember. I don't have any form in that, and part of my work-cas a training procedure for myself-is to stay as light as possible. I float around now-I float around the country, I float around the world, I have no form, I have nothing I have to do. It's very hard to be free-floating. It's like free-falling parachute jumping. You keep wanting to ding to somewhere-like, "Well, I'll have a schedule, a lecture schedule," or "I've got to do good," or "I'm known-I can use that force, that power to do bzzz"-and everybody comes and plays upon that thing. They say, "Welt, don't you want this, or don't you want that?" The game is just to stay in totally free fall, and do whatever you do, like this is what I'm doing-you know, Lock said, "Come down and speak," and so here we are. Because that was a message, not because I am hoping. I don't have any model of why I am doing this or anything else in my life. I'm not collecting anything. I don't have a goal. I'm just a pure instrument in the game.

Giving up the attachment to who you think you are and what you think you are doing is a really scary one. People say, "What do you do with your life?" "I don't know what I'm doing." "So who are you?" "I don't know who I am-who do you think I am?" See, like this group comes in, and the consciousness of this group sees a certain thing which elicits a certain thing out of me. Believe me, if I'm sitting with a group of young spiritual Westerners in the early morning fog at a beach, what comes out of me is a very different cup of tea than this

*attachment
to who
you think
you are*

thing. I don't plan that, but I notice when I hear tapes. I see that when I give a lecture at the Menninger Foundation it's entirely different than when I give a lecture to Hell's Angels or something like that. The content is the same, but the metaphor changes, 'cause the metaphor is determined by the consciousness, even though I don't sit around and plan that. It just keeps happening.

Audience: How do you understand other forms of life in this plane—other animals and plants and things like that?

*other forms
of life
and karma*

Ram Dass: I think everything in form is running off karma, but I don't know what the units are. Like I don't know whether the rock is what it is, or whether the cells of the rock are what it is. Like I don't know which level the game is at in that sense. If you read Meher Baba you go through mineral, animal, vegetable, etc., and these are all part of reincarnations. I don't know that to be true. I've never experienced anything like that so I really don't know. But I think the reason a human birth is considered precious is because of the degree of *self* consciousness—awareness of one's predicament. A cow very rarely knows that it's a cow, and a dog—even though a dog can show a great intelligence at times—has very little concept of itself as a dog, in relation. That seems to be a critical factor that's necessary for what is called the "awakening" in that birth. So I think that almost everything other than human birth is a mechanical running off of karma.

*preciousness of
human birth*

In the Indian system they talk about the three *gunas*, or three forces in the universe: *tamasic*, *rajasic* and *sattvic*; or, the force of inertia, the form of fire or energy, and the form of purity or the *sattvic*. Everything is a composite of these three forces. They would say a rock is primarily a *tamasic* form, and fire is *rajasic* and beings are just going through these different forms. But that's a hard one; that's beyond me.

Audience: I read a book recently called *The Seth Material*, similar to what you described about a person who left this life and talked through someone who still existed. His concept of time was something that I couldn't quite comprehend. You said that this reincarnation is really all in the same time, that it is three-dimensional rather than as we see it. Have you experienced in your other area of consciousness where the time just becomes one? This is something very hard for me to comprehend

Ram Dass: I know—I understand, see, because the comprehender is in time. That's the predicament. When you

say, "I can't comprehend it," it's because the thinking mechanism you have works within time-so time and space are the matrices against which you think. The predicament of dimensions which are not linear-not linear time or linear space-where here and now are both here, and now and then are both now-those are ones we can't *think* about. That's the predicament. There is a book by Maurice Nicol called *Living Time*, which deals with this a great deal. I personally have had the experience-some of you have had this experience also-where I've looked at another being and seen their entire incarnation. I see the baby and I see the old man, I see the dying and I see the whole process-you can see the whole thing right in it. It's all right there, right at that moment. It's only because of your predicament in time that you think that you are relating to one part of it or another. Those are perceptual things that have happened to me. But I don't know much more about it than that. All I can say is that you just have to go a few levels out before time is totally irrelevant Like when you listen to me. If you were to close your eyes and listen to me-without looking at this body-and I asked you to say how old I was, you'd find it very difficult because I don't think of myself as any age. I know this body is 41 years old, but I am not a 41 year old being. Sometimes when you'd listen to me you'd say it's a very old, old, old wise man, and sometimes you'd say it's a very little wise-guy child. It floats in and out of all these different aged beings, because I don't have any model of my age. That's why 99 percent of the people I hang out with are probably under 25 years old. I don't ever feel that I'm any different in age from them-nor do I think that they are particularly obsessed with the predicament either. Because of their interests they aren't in this age or time dimension that same way either: because one level out, you can see that who you are isn't moving in time. Time is describing the incarnations, the packaging changes.

*time
and the
thinking
mechanism*

Audience: Can you tell me about spiritual ambition? Is it just another desire, or is it different?

Ram Dass: It isn't different from others. It's another desire. The desire to become enlightened is still you desiring something. What happens is you start to touch places way beyond what you ever thought you were. Or you start to awaken, and it's like the bliss is much more incredible, the understanding is more incredible, and so on, and the craving for it. It's like a super crave, and that desire is what is used to finish all the other desires. Then, near the end of that sequence, you're left with only that desire; and you see that the desire for it is what's keeping you from it. Then there's the having to let

*the desire
to become
enlightened*

go of the desire in order to become it, which is the final process of dying, really. It's the psychological dying-because desiring that last desire is your final statement of who you are. But the predicament is that who you are can't go through the doorway. You can get right up to the door and you can knock, but you can't go in. They say "it" can come in, but "you" can't. That which desires to get through the door gets right up to the door, and then they say, "The desire's gotta stay right out there. Sorry, leave your shoes outside, but you can come in." At that point the desire falls away. What has happened to me now-really interesting-although I still have plenty of other desires that are getting more and more subtle all the time-that desire is really much less than it ever used to be. It's like-to be as honest as I can-T don't know what birth I'm in, I don't know when it's over. There's nothing much I can do about it- I'm just living as consciously, and openly and trustingly as I am living and it's much more like "Here it is, and now what?" I can't even try to be conscious, because even trying to be conscious is unconscious. So there is no more trying, there is just being. Like, I've meditated because I've tried to meditate, but I could see that it was just another ego trip. Then finally I'd give it up. and then sometimes I'd be drawn into meditation. Meditation would happen to me. So much more now, my life is happening to me-rather than I'm trying to make it happen. Right?

*insight into
the collecting
of experiences*

*sitting at
one's own
dying*

That's a transformation in that sense. Less and less am I an experiencer of it-which is another part of the far out thing, because we usually measure where we're at by the nature of the experiences we have. Like we get high or we feel the light, or we feel the presence of something, and we say, "Ah, wonderful." See, we got another *mark*, like, you know, "Good, I got another one- I just made another one." See? Then you get to the point where you see that the collecting of experiences-like the desire for enlightenment-is just another one of those things. That starts to go, until finally when an experience comes along, you just note it and just let go. Finally you are dead to worldly life but you are fully alive, in the same way that water is. You are just doing your thing, but you are not busy collecting it. You are not experiencing it or collecting it, and in a way it's a horror show because you have died. I am sitting at my own dying and funeral That's really what this process is that I am going through. I am surrendering into pure instrumentality. And the less I am, the more it is; the more optimum this thing is, the less I care about it; or, the less I'm trying to engineer it into being something else.... It's like Ramakrishna. You know, he loved the divine mother Kali so much that he kept craving to be with Kali and worship her. Finally his jungle guru said, "You've got to give up Kali." And

he said, «Man, if I've got to give up Kali, I don't want to go." The guru took a rock-a pointed rock-and stuck it against his forehead and just kept pressing until Kali shattered into a million pieces in Ramakrishna's mind, and then he entered into the next space, which is beyond duality.

It's like if you have always wanted to have a lover that's the perfect lover, and you finally have the lover that's the perfect lover, it's really hard to merge with that lover-ibecause then there's no more lover. No more lover and beloved. You give up dualism, see. The experiencer, or the desirer, or the blisser is all dualism. In that place beyond dualism-then you're nobody-and there's nothing. It's just pure instrumentality. That is what surrendering truly is, or "Not my, but Thy will," or the dying into service, or being an instrument of God, or however you want to say it. Then you leave it in the hands of God whether or not you are going to live or die, or serve or not serve, and you don't decide for yourself what's best.

*beyond
duality*

*dying into
service*