

# WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

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*"I have found and continue to find that there is so much confusion, misunderstanding and misinformation as to what Enlightenment actually is and what it really means. That is why I have encouraged my students to start this publication as a vehicle to present our ongoing investigation into this question, and to share our discoveries with those who are also interested in this vast and most subtle subject."*

Andrew Cohen

## A Passion for Death

*An Interview with Andrew Cohen*

Q: Andrew, you talk a lot about Enlightenment in your teaching. People have very different ideas about what Enlightenment is. What is Enlightenment?

A: Enlightenment is a condition in which there is a conscious knowing that one has come to the end of becoming. To be fully Enlightened means to come to the end of evolution, the end of any possibility of evolution. Even people who only glimpse what Enlightenment is for a brief period have intimations of the kind of finality that I'm speaking about. It is the element of finality that makes that kind of knowing that I'm speaking about so extraordinary and so difficult to describe to people who haven't tasted it.

Q: What does that mean, finality? It sounds incredibly Absolute.

A: It is Absolute. It's the end of becoming, the end of any possibility of becoming ever again. I'm trying to describe to you a condition where one comes to a place where there is only knowing. From that place one can't go anywhere.

Q: That's the end of evolution?

A: Yes, it's the end of evolution of the individual. The end of evolution happens when the individual has completely died and is gone forever, never

to return again. What I'm speaking about is the end. The end is the goal of all true seeking and should really be the only thing that a sincere seeker is interested in if they're serious. I'm saying this because it's so easy to get distracted. Most people lose sight of the goal I'm speaking about after only just beginning to truly awaken.

Q: That's what you teach - the end of evolution, as you said, where there is only knowing?

A: Yes, but I have found that to accept the end I'm speaking about uncondi-

tionally from the very beginning - most people have a lot of trouble doing that.

Q: Why is this?

A: Because of karma. To be able to accept fully the Enlightened condition without conditions one has to be willing to leave everything else behind forever. To do this successfully one has to come almost to the end of one's karmic stream.

Q: Does that mean that somehow it's predetermined?

A: No. In every individual there's an

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## Enlightenment is a Secret

Enlightenment is a secret that very few people know about and even fewer understand. Why is it a secret? Because Enlightenment does not exist in time. That's why it's a secret and that's why it will always be a secret. Enlightenment is a vision that cannot be held or grasped in any way. Beyond this world it's a mystery that is exploding. A fire that is burning. It's a fire that a person is either going to jump into or run away from. This fire burns beyond the mind. No-time is the place where this secret abides. Realize that and you realize the Self you are when there's no mind and no time. Realize that, and cling to that alone as your own Self.

*from Enlightenment is a Secret*



## Editorial

When I met Andrew Cohen three years ago, an explosion of awakening consumed me and has left in its wake a vast perspective and deep understanding that has utterly transformed my life. Andrew's penetrating insight and profound wisdom cut through my unquestioned ideas and beliefs and brought me to see far beyond what I could have ever imagined. Around Andrew there was an atmosphere vibrating with a passionate exploration of this profound realization which was shared by many. Never in my years of seeking had I experienced a group of people involved in such a serious and sincere investigation of the truth.

Virtually from the day Andrew began teaching almost six years ago, his strong passion and confidence, and his focus on living what one has realized have led to much controversy. Andrew's direct way of teaching and his radical rediscovery of what the spiritual life truly is call into question many commonly held ideas about the nature of Enlightenment, its expression and its practical consequences. This has proven to be increasingly challenging to more established spiritual scenes, to the extent that even Andrew's own teacher disagrees with him on basic issues. The ensuing controversy has been characterized by much misunderstanding.

As this philosophical difference with his teacher has come into light, Andrew has been forced to more deeply scrutinize the question: what is Enlightenment?, and this exploration has become an important part of his teaching. This publication has

been created to be an ongoing forum of investigation into this subject. **What is Enlightenment?** intends to inform the reader about Andrew's teaching, present various views on different aspects of Enlightenment, and encourage inquiry and debate.

This first issue features "Passion for Death," a recent interview in which Andrew speaks about his passionate interest in the full realization of Enlightenment, which he describes as the end of becoming. "Personal and Impersonal Enlightenment" presents two dialogues on Andrew's unique and challenging teaching on the distinction between Enlightenment as a personal attainment versus Enlightenment for its own sake. It shows the broad implications of this distinction in the understanding of what Enlightenment is.

Andrew constantly encourages his students to actively engage in the investigation into what Enlightenment is and to explore different views on the subject. He sets an example for this by his own ongoing inquiry in which he ceaselessly questions many aspects of the Enlightened understanding. In the spirit of this investigation, Andrew and his students have initiated several meetings with teachers and students of various traditions. This issue features meetings that Andrew has had during the past year with two teachers. The first article, "To Keep a Precious Jewel," is taken from a meeting that Andrew had in Nepal with one of the foremost Tibetan masters of Dzog Chen, Chatrul Rimpoche. It presents Chatrul Rimpoche's views on the rarity of sincere interest in Enlightenment, the necessity

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## WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT ?

is dedicated to the continuing investigation and discovery of what Enlightenment is. It is published two times a year by the Moksha Foundation, a non-profit organization founded to support the teaching work of Andrew Cohen.



### Editorial and Production Staff

Steve Brett, Regina Burgio, Judy Fox, Mimi Katz, Chris Parish, Bradley Roth, Kathy Bayer Sipp, André van der Braak



Moksha Foundation  
39 Edison Avenue  
Corte Madera, CA 94925  
U.S.A.  
Tel (415) 927-3210  
Fax (415) 927-2032



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## Biography of Andrew Cohen

ANDREW COHEN is a teacher of Enlightenment. He was born in New York City in 1955. A spontaneous spiritual awakening at the age of sixteen inspired Andrew to abandon his worldly aspirations six years later and devote himself to a rigorous spiritual search. After years of spending time with various teachers and practicing different forms of meditation, his quest for final Liberation was still unfulfilled. Then he heard about a little-known teacher in India named H.W.L. Poonja and went to visit him.



This unexpected meeting ended his search. A profound realization immediately reawakened what he had glimpsed as a youth and in a few short weeks all of his fundamental questions were answered, leaving Andrew radically transformed and fully immersed

in a deep understanding of his own true nature. His teacher soon told him that their work together was over and that Andrew should now go out and help others. He said that Andrew was the man he had been waiting for his entire life and he wanted Andrew to "accept responsibility for the work."

It was soon apparent that Andrew had an extraordinary ability to communicate his understanding to others. In fact, he had no choice in the matter. His surrender was so deep that what he had realized was spontaneously expressing itself in his every action and word. Since his meeting with his teacher over five years ago, Andrew has been giving teachings throughout the world. At present, he teaches in Northern California where he lives with his community of formal students and often travels to teach.

Since he began teaching, Andrew's direct and radical approach has proven challenging for many. There has been much controversy about his bold claim that Enlightenment is possible here and now for anybody who truly wants to be free and that its attainment is not dependent on practice or technique. A crucial element of Andrew's teaching is that one's actions are not separate from who they are, but actually express the depth of one's understanding. His insistence that one must fully live what they have realized has been widely misunderstood. Many have been unable to grasp the depth and subtlety that his teaching has reached - even his own teacher has responded with disinterest and negativity. Also over the past year, Andrew has been forced to face the painful fact of his teacher's dishonesty and duplicity in their relationship. His struggle to come to terms with this has compelled him to deepen his investigation of the Enlightened condition. Unwilling to compromise his bold stand that one cannot separate behavior from the depth of realization, he has been forced to stand alone in what he knows to be true. Andrew's passionate interest in sharing what he has realized and summoning others to that same understanding is thriving as the rarity of his teaching is more widely recognized. The purity and fervor of his call for true understanding and evolution is awakening the desire for Liberation in the hearts of many. ◆ K.B.S.



# What We Do is Who We Are

*The following is an excerpt from a KGNU radio interview with Andrew Cohen in Boulder, Colorado in September 1991.*

Q: So I think a good place to start would be for you to describe really what it is that you do. In what sense are you a teacher and what is your teaching really about?

A: What I teach is Enlightenment.

Q: What do you mean when you use that word, Enlightenment?

A: Enlightenment is the end of the path, it's the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It's the end of all human striving.

Q: Is Enlightenment an experience?

A: Hopefully not. For most people it usually remains to be, but for a few people, for rare people that are very lucky and very fortunate and very sincere, definitely not. Do you know what

that means? If something's an experience, it means that it's bound in time.

Q: Talk a little bit about your teaching method.

A: It's direct.

Q: I noticed that. You don't come out and give a prepared talk. You simply enter the room and you ask for questions, and it seems like most of what goes on there is between you and the questioner.

A: I find, especially speaking about spiritual matters, that it's very important to speak directly to the individual, because most people have so many ideas about all this. And I find if I can speak to somebody directly that I can usually find out exactly what ideas they have that are interfering with their own direct perception of what they're looking for.

Q: I recall a teaching - that a teacher

really has nothing to share with his students or her students other than his or her being.

A: That's right.

Q: And that all the talking, in a sense, is a subterfuge.

A: No, no, I think that what comes out of our mouths is an expression of what we know and who we are. What we do is who we are. And that's something quite challenging. A lot of people disagree with it and find that hard to accept and hard to understand, but I think that it's very important for people to realize that tremendous effects come out of what we do. What we do is who we are. What we know is what we do.

Q: In what way do you feel responsible?

A: I feel absolutely responsible. Absolute responsibility for someone who is deadly serious can't be avoided - even though it usually is. ♦

## Editorial continued from page 2

for renunciation, and how people have differing capacities for awakening; it also illuminates fundamental similarities in the respective teachings. Following this is "A Sufi Should Never Give a Bad Example," an account of Andrew's meeting with Irina Tweedie, a Sufi teacher who lives in London, in which renunciation and the importance of right conduct in spiritual life are discussed.

"Death of a Vipassana Meditator" is a personal account of a Vipassana meditator's meeting with Andrew. It describes his experience of joining Andrew's sangha and the profound impact this has had on his life.

"The 'Advaita Shuffle'" is a two-part article, the first part of which, "The Perils of the 'Advaita Shuffle,'" briefly comments on the Advaita teaching. It discusses the limitations of the Advaita philosophy when misinterpreted and misused. The second part, "A Practical Illustration of the 'Advaita Shuffle,'" presents an example of the confusion that results from an incorrect interpretation of the Absolute teaching, as discussed in the first part of the article.

"The Profound Implications of Not Being Lost in the Absolute View" is a commentary on Andrew's teaching that Enlightenment goes far beyond just the experience of the Absolute and it explains his passionate conviction that one's actions are a reflection of the depth of Enlightenment.

One area of Andrew's teaching that has engendered much controversy and criticism is the fact that he has a community of formal students. In "What is Sangha?" Andrew clarifies the true meaning of Sangha, speaks about how his community originated and relates his own observations of its purpose in spiritual life.

We hope that this publication will provide a fertile ground for inquiry into and debate about the subject of Enlightenment. We intend for it to inspire an ongoing discussion. In future issues we will publish a letters page and would like to encourage our readers to respond and engage in this dialogue for the purpose of furthering interest in and understanding about Enlightenment. ♦ K.B.S.



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## A Passion for Death

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unknown factor that no one can second guess. People can change at any time and are capable of taking extraordinary leaps at the most unexpected moments.

Q: So it's not fixed?

A: No, nothing is fixed. Anything is possible at any moment. That's the good news, but very few people have the courage to believe it. Because if an individual accepts that anything is possible at any moment, then that means they would have to consider that maybe even they could abandon all of their conditioning in an instant. To get someone to have the courage to actually do that, and do it without hesitation and without fear, is quite rare. I have found that many people, even in spite of having taken great leaps into the unknown and who have tasted deeply the Enlightened condition, can still all too easily be deceived by the creations of their own mind, by unexamined assumptions about the nature of reality and by memory. To be able to truly renounce

all of it absolutely and abandon all of it absolutely is quite a rare achievement. It takes a lot of courage to stand alone in the unknown.

Q: What is needed for a person in order to realize this kind of depth?

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*The end is the goal  
of all true seeking  
and should really  
be the only thing  
that a sincere seeker  
is interested in  
if they're serious.*

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A: Courage and passion for death.

Q: Passion for death?

A: Passion for death. Passion for death in this life. Passion for total renuncia-

tion of the known. There has to be a passion for living in uncharted waters.

Q: Wow!

A: It's a completely different way of living where everything is always unknown - when one is constantly in the condition I was describing before of only knowing. You see?

Q: Only knowing?

A: Only knowing. Only knowing. In this knowing there is no falling back to anything and there is also no movement towards anything.

Q: Is that the end of becoming?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Would that be the essence of your teaching?

A: Yes.

Q: Why are you so controversial?

A: Because of my passion for death. ♦

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... there has been a passion and an intensity that comes out of me when I am teaching and when I am speaking about the truth that I cannot control and that literally overwhelms me. This passion that comes from nowhere and burns so deeply in my veins is the truth itself. It is this passion that has from the very beginning forced me to tell the truth and to never deceive anyone else about the reality of their own condition. It is this passion that has caused many to feel threatened. The intensity of my call has always demanded everything that a person is able to give - one's whole heart and all of one's soul to the source itself, from which arises nothing but perfect freedom, true knowledge and the exquisite happiness of knowing that one has come home forever. Truly, there is no other way if one wants to be FREE.

from *Autobiography of an Awakening*



# Two Dialogues on Impersonal Enlightenment

with Andrew Cohen

## Dialogue 1

Q: You mentioned Personal Enlightenment and Impersonal Enlightenment. What's the difference between them?

A: In the first, the interest in Enlightenment is for personal gain. That means: "I want to have a particular insight, a particular experience or a particular understanding - because I want relief from suffering or because it fascinates me, etc." The second refers to the discovery of an interest in Enlightenment for its own sake - not for your sake.

Q: Do you mean for the good of everyone, or just for its own sake?

A: For its own sake. For its own sake will be for the good of everyone - that will be the result, but that is not the idea in mind. When I speak about Impersonal Enlightenment I am speaking about a condition where one is so hopelessly enamored with the Truth itself that one is completely lost in it. In that total immersion, the living fact of Enlightenment itself and all that it implies and signifies, has become the sole love of your life. It's not for your sake anymore. It's only for its own sake, for the sake of Enlightenment itself.

Q: Does Personal Enlightenment eventually lead to Impersonal Enlightenment?

A: Not necessarily.

Q: Isn't one liberated from duality in Personal Enlightenment?

A: Yes, but then the realization of non-duality occurs within the context of the personal.

Q: So then you're saying that the Enlightenment becomes limited somehow by the personal?

A: Yes. It's delicate. It's a very delicate matter. Listen, Personal Enlightenment

is a secret. In Personal Enlightenment you are living incognito. You know the Truth, but it's a secret. It's a secret that only you know about. But because you know that's fine with you, you don't care because you are free. That's Personal Enlightenment. That is quite an extraordinary event in itself and no doubt very rare. But I'm speaking about something different. I'm speaking about something that is not a secret anymore. I'm speaking about something that cannot be a secret anymore. Because the kind of secrecy and the inherent compromise that must take place in the condition of Personal Enlightenment becomes an impossible possibility in the condition of Impersonal Enlightenment. There is an inherent compromise in living a secret even if it is an extraordinary secret, because in the realization and practice of

Personal Enlightenment one "fits in" and tolerates the inherent compromise in and of the "world." The world here represents the condition of accumulated igno-

rance that the world mind is - that he or she who is supposedly Enlightened, has transcended and gone beyond.

Q: What is the difference in how one knows the personal and impersonal?

A: For someone looking from the outside or from the point of view of the knower himself?

Q: The knower himself.

A: In Personal Enlightenment compromise does not trouble the Enlightened one. In the Impersonal condition that kind of compromise is not a possibility.

Q: What is the compromise?

A: Fitting in.

Q: So in Personal Enlightenment there is no motive left to change anything?

A: Right, exactly. In Personal Enlightenment the person doesn't care because they have achieved a self-satisfied condition of freedom and personal

liberation. Beyond personal liberation there is a profound discovery of something else. One comes upon a particular sense of urgency where one can't help but care. You have to go way beyond Personal Enlightenment to even begin to know what I'm talking about.

Q: Go way beyond it?

A: Yes. Destroy it even! Then and only then will the kind of caring I'm speaking about reveal itself - before that it can't.

Q: But once you get a glimpse of freedom and you see that you don't exist in the way you thought you had existed, where is the motive to change? Who do you want to change and why?

A: A glimpse of the Absolute is a glimpse of the destruction of the known and of everything that has been created. In that glimpse you realize that there is nowhere to go and nothing to do. You discover that there is no one to become and therefore nothing to change. Beyond that, beyond that point is a condition where one is overcome with a



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*It's not for your sake anymore. It's only for its own sake, for the sake of Enlightenment itself.*

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*If you are lucky, eventually you will come to the point where the idea of personal freedom is no longer what allures you, no longer what interests you. What allures you will be something way beyond that, and the discovery of that evolutionary urgency will become your passion, your only love and your sole reason for existence.*

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tremendous sense of urgency and purpose that has nothing at all to do with you.

Q: Would that come from the Absolute itself?

A: It couldn't come from anywhere else.

## Dialogue 2

Q: Could you give some examples of what the difference is between Personal Enlightenment and Impersonal Enlightenment?

A: What is the difference between a burning match and a raging forest fire?

Q: It's difficult to understand.

A: To find this kind of understanding you have to feel deeply in your heart.

Q: It seems like the forest fire has to spread.

A: Yes, but it means and implies much more than that. It is the discovery of a choiceless and absolute commitment to the realization of perfect purity in yourself for the sake of all beings - not for you. This is something very sacred and very delicate and has to be discovered individually on a very deep level. The effect of this discovery, this realization, is very explosive and it will affect other people by the fact of its mere existence - but in it, there is no idea whatsoever to "help" anybody else. There is only complete, choiceless, one-pointed devotion to the realization of perfection and a knowing of the urgency and necessity of that. There is an evolutionary urgency, an evolutionary necessity that some people come upon and when discovered, they will do whatever it takes to succeed perfectly.

Q: Is Personal Enlightenment a prerequisite for this?

A: No, not necessarily. Some are able to leap directly to the perspective I'm referring to, while others will be unable to comprehend or perceive what I'm speaking about before the realization of Personal Enlightenment, while still others may never be able to comprehend it or perceive it. If you are lucky, eventually you will come to the point where the idea of personal freedom is no longer what allures you, no longer what interests you. What allures you will be some-

thing way beyond that, and the discovery of that evolutionary urgency will become your passion, your only love and your sole reason for existence.

What I'm speaking about cannot be contained. Because of this it frightens people. Because for this kind of absolute transformation love has to be so deep - you have to have so much love in your heart, because otherwise it won't be possible. In what I'm describing there are no boundaries, and the implications of that are revolutionary. ♦

## Surrender is Choicelessness

Surrender occurs when you come to a point when you no longer have any choice. You cannot understand what surrender is as long as you still are trying to give something up or trying to attain something. When you realize this choicelessness you come upon a condition that is like a free-fall, a place which is located neither here nor there. Beyond all possibilities there is no longer any question of shoulds and shouldn'ts, coulds or couldn'ts. One has realized a place beyond all possibilities. The direct realization of that place, of that perspective, of that absolute choicelessness, is the true realization of surrender. After you have jumped off a cliff and you are in the midst of falling freely, when you have lost sight of the cliff above you and have lost all memory of the ground below you, then you will understand what surrender is. Only after you've already jumped and you're freely falling can you truly understand what surrender means, not one moment before.

Only when you are in the condition of surrender itself can you understand what it actually is. You cannot understand what surrender is if you want something, even if what you want is Liberation. Surrender is its own condition, it's not something you can do.

*from Enlightenment is a Secret*



# To Keep a Precious Jewel

*In January 1991 while Andrew was teaching in Bodhgaya, India, a woman who was intrigued to find many fundamental similarities between his teaching and that of the Tibetan Dzog Chen teachings brought Andrew to meet Chatrul Rimpoche, one of the foremost Dzog Chen masters alive today. He was introduced to the West in 1969 by Thomas Merton in The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton. In this meeting, Chatrul Rimpoche questioned Andrew fiercely about the depth of his realization and the nature of his teachings. At the end of the first meeting he said to Andrew, "Please bring countless beings to this path."*

*In February 1991, they had a second meeting in Kathmandu, Nepal in which a lengthy discussion ensued. The following are excerpts from this meeting. They discussed people's differing capacities for awakening, how introducing people to an experience of Enlightenment is only the beginning, how few are genuinely interested, and the importance of renunciation in spiritual life.*

Andrew: [It seems that] almost no one truly understands the possibility of the absolute immediacy of Enlightenment here and now.

Chatrul: There are all kinds of sentient beings, and people have all different levels of understanding in the world. Even if the Buddha [sat] in front of many different people - there were many different people who would have many ideas about him. People would not see him as an Enlightened Buddha even. If you see people, one person will say one thing, one will say the other, because there are inferior, [middling] and there are superior types of beings, and they can see the different levels. But even if the Buddha is sitting beside somebody, they won't even know it because they cannot see because of their own obscurations, their own level of mind.

A: My doubtlessness and my age, many people find threatening and hard to accept.

C: All Enlightened people have the same problem. Look how many people around the Buddha - they were always making a lot of trouble for him - and anybody, they all have enemies. Or there are heretics that were always causing trouble to the Buddha. They were always trying to get him or debate, or whatever. Even you look at Jesus Christ. He was hung up on the cross. That's only because people did not like what he [was saying]. They felt threatened by him.

You have many disciples which you obviously must be giving the introduction or the realization to.... So can all of them get it when you give it to them? Are they all able to get this?

A: They all get it, but they're not all able to keep it.

C: That's usual. Introducing people to the nature or Enlightened essence, is not enough. You have to actually further it, you have to nurture it so to speak. And the best way in which people can realize this preciousness or nurture it, is if they meditate on impermanence - then they will gain some kind of renunciation and they will be able to actually practice what you have introduced to them, so they can develop it into realization. At first they will have the experience of what the Enlightened nature is, and because they cannot hold it, because they cannot hold it as you said, they lose it.... The most important thing is to have this renunciation. And renunciation means that you teach that. If you have renunciation it means you realize that there's actually no essence to the world. I mean, there's nothing of it. The world has no real essence; it's just meaningless - the whole of samsara. If you have complete realization of the faults of samsara, that is realization, then that means you have gone beyond samsara to really actualizing and understanding that this world has no ultimate meaning. And so to teach, you should teach like that. Give somebody something

precious, and if they don't hold onto it, it means they haven't understood its preciousness. So if you introduce people to the nature and they don't understand the faults of samsara and they think, "Well, maybe I have a little suffering, but if I go over there I'll be alright" - there's some place else to go. But they should have complete understanding, complete renunciation, complete understanding or disgust with samsara, knowing that there is no other place to go, that now is the time to practice diligence, the teachings and the understanding which you have imparted, the realization that you've imparted to them. It's like a jewel. If you get a jewel and you realize its preciousness, you'll always keep it.

A: Yes.

C: You should always teach one renunciation and impermanence, and the faults of samsara. You should teach how to give up all unvirtuous actions, not do any unvirtuous, harmful actions, how to take on virtuous actions, meaning to further the realization of the mind and the path. And then if you teach like this, then everything should be fine.

A: This is the essence of everything that I'm teaching, and I especially emphasize two things: I encourage as much as possible a student to accept as much responsibility or full responsibility for the truth of what they have realized, and I'm feeling more and more strongly the absolute necessity for renunciation [in my teaching].

C: It's the whole basis. If you don't have renunciation, you don't have realization.

A: In the West people don't understand that. And in my passion for stressing the need and the absolute importance of renunciation, in the West people have trouble accepting this because it's not in their culture.

C: In the West it's probably the fault of the fact that nobody's ever been ex-



plained about renunciation properly. In the West people are quite intelligent, but they haven't had anybody who's really explained to them very carefully about the whole process and how to meditate upon it. Maybe one time people don't get it, two times people don't get it, three times people don't get it, but you should explain over and over again until people do have some kind of understanding. Maybe there's only one or two people, because of their past fortunate karma they're able to understand immediately these kinds of things. So,

of course, you will have to say over and over again in order to have people have an understanding of renunciation, and

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*If you don't have renunciation,  
you don't have realization.*

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also there are very few people who have this understanding of the faults of samsara. There are very few people who have actual understanding or feeling of receptivity towards the teachings.

A: The passion I feel burning inside me to give this teaching to other people — I feel that this jewel must be shared with as many people as possible, because I feel this secret is so precious and so few people know about it, and at the same time I'm faced with the fact that so few people are truly interested in it.

C: I have the same problem. When I also talk about it there are some people who are listening, but they don't understand; some people don't even bother to listen. ♦

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## A Sufi Should Never Give a Bad Example

*In June 1991 while teaching in London, Andrew met with Irina Tweedie, a Sufi teacher and author of two books: Chasm of Fire and Daughter of Fire. They had a warm discussion which covered many aspects of spiritual life. They shared their observations on the necessity for most people to have more than just one experience of Enlightenment and on the importance of right conduct in spiritual life, especially for spiritual teachers. The following are excerpts from this talk.*

Mrs. Tweedie: You are a Vedantist — what I've read of you.

Andrew: Is that what it seems?

T: Well, I think so, yes.

A: Because you saw the little excerpts from the book?

T: Yes, that's right, yes. That's Vedanta. It's very nice. It's a very, very good teaching. I personally find everyone who tries to raise the consciousness of humanity does good work. That's all one can say.

A: I think only a few really know what they're talking about. Many are teaching from memory. They may have had an experience and they're teaching from the memory of that experience or they're teaching from tradition — then many just start following a tradition.

T: Yes, I think you're quite right.

A: And then they get lost, maybe forever.

T: Well, one has to have experience. Our teacher, Bhai Sahib, used to say, "I'm not teaching you anything," because he didn't teach me anything. He said, "I give you experiences; do with them what you like." And that was it. But this is the path of the mystics, you see. One has sometimes quite incredible experiences and then the trouble begins, because you don't know what to do with them.

A: Right.

T: You think you're going crazy; at least I was in that situation. But it's so many years ago.

A: What I've been saying a lot lately is that it's not the experiences that really matter. Because a lot of people think to have an Enlightenment experience, then they'll be changed forever.

T: Yes.

A: [I feel] it's the readiness of the person to recognize what they've realized and live it, which is going to make the difference. It's not necessarily the experience at all.

T: Yes, and I don't always think that one experience is enough.

A: No, no, for most people it isn't.

T: You see, I'm at it since '61 when I met my teacher, and only now I begin to understand what he tried to tell me. It's very, very difficult. One experience is not enough. It's a gradual expansion of consciousness and it takes time.



A: Your book is very popular, very well-read by many all over the world.

T: Thank you, thank you. It's very kind of you to say so.

A: I was very impressed with it when I read it. About four years ago I looked through it. I was very impressed with it.

T: It was [a] hard time, but it was nothing really. I didn't do it for anybody else, but I wanted the truth and I felt this man can do something about it. I'll never forget when I said that, "I know that you can give me God." He said, "Give you God?" The irony — like a cat if you brush it against the fur, you see. But then it's hard; spiritual life is very hard and one has to live ethically.

A: Ethically, yes, it's very important.

T: The ethics is the most important thing.

A: This is what I find — a lot of the modern teachers don't live ethically and many people have become cynical because of that.

*continued on page 10*



T: Correct, I quite agree with you.

A: Most actually don't, few do. So many people when they come to see me are actually quite cynical. Even though their heart is still yearning, they've become very cynical because they've seen many famous, supposedly Enlightened teachers behaving in a very unethical manner, and they get confused.

T: Yes, this is very well said, this is true. But those people who are supposedly Enlightened, *are they?*

A: Well, that's a good question - meaning they obviously know something.

## Ramana Maharshi

Ramana Maharshi who was obviously the Absolute realization, the Absolute teaching, made a statement in his total renunciation of the world. He had his realization when he was sixteen years old. When that happened he didn't say, "Okay, I've just woken up. Great. Now I'll go back to high school, get a degree in engineering, get married, be a family man, and then I'll have satsang in the evenings." He went down to Tiruvannamalai, he took off his Brahmin string and threw it in a pond. He actively gave up everything in complete submission to the Absolute. The way he lived his life was a pure expression of complete and total renunciation of the world to the ultimate degree. What I'm saying is one cannot avoid anything if you want to go deeply into what it means to be awake and what it means to realize - it's not a safe endeavor. One can't avoid including everything in the investigation of who and what you are.

Andrew Cohen

People spend time with them and have powerful experiences.

T: Yes, for instance Rajneesh was a very powerful man. He had yogic powers, but there are two different things. There are yogic powers and the divine powers.

A: Right.

T: Both outwardly look the same, but the one you acquire with your own effort, the yogic power -

A: It's very different.

T: And the divine power you receive when you surrender - it's a very different story. If you acquire it with the yogic power, there's some kind of - at least some vestige of the ego remains. Our teacher used to say the problem with people is that they begin to teach before the ego goes.

A: Right, right.

T: They will try to please people, and you see, I don't need to tell you because you certainly don't please people if you are strict - you don't - but that's the problem. They try to please people.

A: It's corruption, yes.

T: It's already corruption. The purity is not more there.

A: I knew that I had to give up everything to be able to teach, but I didn't think that anybody else would have to. But after two or three years, I started to realize that everybody who wants to be truly free has to renounce and that was when my teaching started changing. I started putting emphasis on renunciation which I didn't at the beginning at all.

T: Very important. All that you see here is not mine. It belongs to the landlord. This is his house actually. I'm a tenant.

A: So maybe that's why you said you heard I was strict. It could only be that that you were referring to, because I'm stressing renunciation and people don't like that.



A: Do you know there's several teachers now - they teach a path called crazy wisdom. Have you heard of them?

T: Yes, I have heard about it, but I know nothing about it. Do you know something about it?

A: Well, it means that the teacher can do whatever they want; and anything that the teacher does is a teaching, including taking advantage of people.

T: Oh, this is a kind of excuse.

A: This is what I think.

T: I know there are certain Sufis - they don't mind the [blame], but it's something different, something entirely different. Here they are excesses, you see, they can do what they like.

A: Right, exactly.

T: How can you get rid of desires that way?

A: Right, exactly.

T: To get rid of desires is really the main teaching of all the great religions. Detachment from the worldly objects and look towards the spiritual path and [for there] to be less and less desires. The only desire [that remains is] God. How can you - it seems crazy, as you say, crazy.

A: Most people are so confused, they need a simple, pure teaching, because the world is such a confusing place. So when people go to a teacher who also is crazy and confusing, then it makes things even more difficult.

T: I don't think they get anywhere.

A: Well, confused, more confused. Because I feel that the world is such a confusing place for everybody - I think the teacher has to live ethically.

T: A Sufi should never give a bad example. Gurujī used to say, "We are mystics, but we are not lotus eaters nor idle dogs. We are responsible men and women.... We will never give a bad example." ♦



# Death of a Vipassana Meditator

by Richard Klein

IN FEBRUARY 1990, near the end of an 18 day meditation retreat, I experienced a very shattering insight, a burst of light, in which one thing appeared to me very clearly: that I had, over the course of life and time, been to the greatest heights and to the lowest depths, that this rising and falling itself was samsara, suffering, and that I wanted it to end forever. Practically speaking however, I resumed my life still convinced that I could have it all: the sacred and the profane, the clarity and the confusion, the mindful and the mindless. In the circle of local Vipassana meditators, there was talk of a young Enlightened American teacher giving satsang in nearby Marin. I knew meditators who were going to see him and I found as a result that our previously austere Tuesday night meditations were swirling with an energy I found thrilling.

I didn't know anything had happened when I first met Andrew Cohen. I went to satsang and I went home. I went a second and a third time. He told me that in order to follow my heart I must first find my heart. Over some months I became increasingly absorbed and ecstatic. I went to satsang whenever I could. I was experiencing blasts of insight, profound bliss and great excitement. I found that my meditation became effortless and deep. Often I would come home in the late afternoon and sit for hours. I felt like I was being lifted out of my life. Transcendence was becoming my natural state. I knew I was dying. Anyway, I was pretty tired of being who I was, for myself and for everyone else as well. In this detachment I discovered a worldly confidence I had long sought after, only to find that I was disinterested in indulging it in worldly ways. My karma was burning up and falling away. Some of my friends recognized this, but to most what was happening to me remained invisible completely. This was also true of my Buddhist friends, even those who had experienced the power and sweetness of Andrew's teaching. I had shared my spiritual life with them,

we had been on the same path. But eventually I wound up feeling very alone in my escalating interest in and surrender to Andrew's profound and ruthless Dharma. As the living Truth consumed me, a continued interest in the known, in some technique, tradition or ambition, left them distant from me. I began to feel like a ghost haunting my own life.

What it was that had drawn me to meditation and to spiritual life was a knowledge or intimation, a feeling for something deeper, more profound, truer than the relative existence I knew and shared with the world. In meditation, in the Dharma, I felt privy to something timeless and infinitely satisfying. In satsang with Andrew, amidst his students, I was certain that that timelessness had become manifest. Instead of being privy to a glimpse, here I could be in it and remain in it, totally immersed. In Andrew's words and in what was happening around him all my questions had become answers. Wholeness, awe, profound love, and the ecstasy of insight, the Dharma was flowing like a great river. THE Dharma. THAT Dharma. The one and the same I had read about and loved, was no longer confined to books, practices, or solitary longings. The personal challenge to know - absolutely - who I am and where I stood excited me as nothing else could. My desire grew. I wanted more than my back and forth, weekend to weekend schedule allowed. I wanted the holy life to BE my life, and so I expressed to Andrew my desire to become a formal student.

Up to this point my

focus was really on my own relationship to Andrew. I was aware of a large group of people around him, formal students who traveled and lived together as a sangha, a spiritual community. I felt the desire to join in the life these people were living together and I recognized that they had all given up a lot to live such ecstatic lives. But over the years I had put a lot into building up my worldly life, into my friendships, my music, my spiritual practice, and I wasn't ready to give it all away. Something strong enough to have such an effect on people - or on me! - was both extremely exciting and terrifying. What was this force anyway? Maybe they're all deluded? What will happen to me if I go all the way? What will everyone think? In spite of this, something was compelling me to go wildly beyond my limits. Going forward was the only direction I wanted to go and within half a year's time I became a formal student.

Life in the sangha moved with blinding speed and single-mindedness. The seriousness with which people in the sangha took matters of life, wisdom, responsibility and inspiration blew me

*continued on page 18*

## It is Not the Experience of Enlightenment that Matters

It is not the experience of Enlightenment that matters. It is only the ego's relationship to that experience that has any meaning. Two different individuals could undergo the very same spiritual experience and the ego of one will relate to the event in one way and the ego of the other will relate to that event in a very different manner. The very essence of an individual is revealed in the way they relate to experiences of bliss, emptiness, insight and illumination.

Revelatory experiences themselves do not transform anyone. It is only the inherent readiness of an individual to accept what is revealed in these experiences that can truly transform them.

*from Enlightenment is a Secret*



# The "Advaita Shuffle"

The following is a two-part article on the Advaita teachings and the potential dangers of being "stuck" in this particular viewpoint. The first part discusses how these teachings are often misunderstood and abused. The second part is a practical illustration.

## PART 1: The Perils of the "Advaita Shuffle" or These Days, is the Absolute View Used as an Excuse to Avoid Waking Up Fully?

The Advaita, or non-dual teachings, are widely considered the highest teachings. When their depth and subtlety are not fully understood, they can be misinterpreted and misused. The following is an in-depth discussion of this topic.

Why does Andrew Cohen feel that the Advaita view - a teaching which set Andrew free over five years ago - is generally abused and, as it is often taught, out-and-out ridiculous? How is it that Andrew feels that the Advaita teachings of non-duality, of Absolute Truth, are in fact used by many of its proponents as an excuse to actually avoid waking up fully? And why does Andrew stress that realizing that one is already free and not separate from what one is seeking is almost always not enough to set a person *truly* free?

Andrew has been compelled to question the Absolute teachings of Advaita as they are usually taught these days because of a fundamental disagreement with his teacher, H.W.L. Poonja. Others, such as Jean Klein and Alexander Smit, are also teachers of this approach. While some of the proponents of these teachings may have experienced a great release as a result of exposure to these teachings, many mistakenly feel relieved from the burden of responsibility for their own behavior because of erroneous conclusions drawn from their spiritual experiences of no-separation. Realizing that "everything is the Self," they concluded that therefore there was nothing and nobody to be responsible for. In this way of thinking, responsibility implies duality, and any notion of responsibility is therefore seen to be an expression of ignorance. In this view almost any mode of conduct becomes acceptable - when one proponent was asked why he habitually acted rudely and with dishonesty, he said, "Oh, that's not real, that's just my personality." Another student said, "Nothing mat-

ters because it's all the Self." Others have answered with incredulity when asked about responsibility for behavior, "How can there be responsibility in Freedom? Who's responsible?" Even these teachers themselves have been known to use similar responses as a way of avoiding questionable ethical conduct in their own lives.

Andrew does not deny that the Advaita teachings can liberate someone from the fundamental illusion of duality by revealing that there is indeed no separation between a person and what it is that they are seeking. But the teaching, as it is so frequently taught, is fundamentally limited in that unless a person is perfectly, fully and finally Liberated by these teachings (a very rare event) their lives *will be* to some extent an expression of duality and an expression of ignorance.

Many people do have profound experiences when exposed to such teachings, but the teachings usually have the effect of enslaving a person to a deluded view that they are completely free simply because they have had a glimpse of the fact that there never could have been

self-delusion, when it is used to avoid one's own difficulties or areas of avoidance in order to obliterate the uncomfortable, *dualistic facts* of one's own personal situation. The Advaita view can paralyze a person and prevent him or her from sober self-introspection because to consider one's "self" is to entertain illusion, is to deny one's own realization, is to embrace the falsity of dualism. In this way, the opportunity to truly be free to face any difficulty or imperfections in one's own character is destroyed. Any desire to change anything, in this view, is seen to be coming from the ego, from ignorance, because change implies separation and only ego could want change.

In examining the Advaita view as it is usually taught, and the effects of these teachings on many students, Andrew has seen that one has to go beyond this fixed view if one wants to be truly free. He emphasizes again and again that a human being must become a perfect expression of the Absolute realization unless they are *already* fully Enlightened; otherwise, a person will be lost in a deluded concept about the Absolute rather than being a perfect expression of

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*When one proponent was asked why he habitually acted rudely and with dishonesty, he said, "Oh, that's not real, that's just my personality."*

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a separate entity who could be bound in the first place. It is at this point that the Advaita view, as it is frequently proclaimed these days, becomes patently ridiculous. Such a view can make a person extremely confident, because any difficulty that one is faced with, from within or without, can be "Advaited" by saying that it is all unreal or all the Self anyway (this is the "Advaita Shuffle.") However, this confidence becomes a form of arrogance, a form of

the Absolute. Andrew stresses that the realization of the Absolute is the starting point of the spiritual life. The goal is a complete and radical transformation and evolution of a human being to such a degree that there truly is no longer any separation between who that person is and what they could possibly become. That is the realization of Buddhahood, final emancipation and the end of all becoming. ♦ B.R.



## PART 2: A Practical Illustration of the "Advaita Shuffle" and Being Stuck in an Absolute View

*The "Advaita Shuffle" can be used skillfully at the right time by a spiritual teacher to temporarily stop the mind and thereby reveal the beginningless and endless ocean of being, usually obscured. Unfortunately this technique is frequently used as a way to deceive oneself and others when the user is placed in a position of threat, challenge or difficulty. The following is an example.*

### The "Advaita Shuffle"

Andrew recently had a talk with a teacher named Ganga, whose teaching very much exemplifies the Advaita approach. Ganga had been Andrew's student for several months, after which she went to see Poonjaji, Andrew's teacher, who reportedly told her to teach. She began teaching a little over a year ago, after which she publicly spoke critically of Andrew and his teaching, saying he had a "serious misunderstanding." Because of this Andrew attended one of her public meetings in order to publicly discuss what she felt his misunderstanding to be. This proved difficult, as Ganga frequently tried to dissolve Andrew's effort at objective inquiry into the nature of her criticisms with Absolute or Advaita statements, thereby undermining the very possibility of a mutual exploration of the differences in their views. In this way, the talk was a fascinating and revealing illustration of the perils of the "Advaita Shuffle" (i.e. being stuck in the Absolute view).

The following is a typical interchange from the discussion:

**A:** *I think that...behavior and conduct is the only way that one can objectively understand and judge to what degree another person has really awakened and understood. There's really no other way to tell.*

**G:** *Well, I disagree with you radically.*

**A:** *How else can you judge?*

**G:** *Well, who's judging?*

**A:** *Whoever you are.*

**G:** *Well, then who's identifying with the judging?*

**A:** *Come on. This is called the "Advaita Shuffle." You can say that to anything....It's impossible to have a conversation because you can "Advaita" anything that way and it's impossible to make any progress. You can say, "Who's asking the question? Who's answering the question? Who wants to know? Who's worrying?"*

**G:** *Well, I suggest you ask those questions and then you're quiet and you listen.*

**A:** *Right, but then there's no discussion.*

**G:** *Well, what's discussion? Then there's no one to discuss with.*

This exchange illustrates the impossibility of having a rational, mutual inquiry with someone who is stuck in the Absolute viewpoint. It defies all common sense and logic. Prolonged exposure can even lead one to doubt one's sanity. Ganga is continually answering any question with further questions about who the questioner is. Superficially this may seem profound, but in a mutual investigation it can all too easily be used as a smokescreen to avoid any real inquiry whatsoever. The "Advaita shuffle" enables a person to use the Advaita teachings of non-duality to "Advaita away" conflicts, disagreements, or uncomfortable aspects of reality. The attention is drawn away from the actual content of the discussion and put back on the questioner himself. This excerpt also shows how proponents of the Advaita view can be so fixated on the Absolute position that they regard any form of discussion as a descent into the relative, and a manifestation of ignorance. In this way, all desire and pos-

sibility for investigation, learning and change are destroyed, and this is why Andrew emphasizes so strongly the dangers of being stuck in the Advaita approach.

### Being Stuck in an Absolute View

The following is an example of being stuck in an Absolute view. In response to Andrew's inquiry as to what she sees his misunderstanding to be, Ganga says that Andrew has "landed," by which she means that he has identified with his realization, and has therefore lost it. In the discussion, Andrew and Ganga address the question of what it means to be identified with one's realization, and whether or not identifying with one's realization necessarily means one has landed. Andrew challenges Ganga's idea of what it means to be identified by pointing out that there is no Enlightenment when a person separates themselves from their own understanding. Ganga's idea of Enlightenment is totally divorced from the human being, has no bearing on the life they lead and entails no responsibility, because in her view the Enlightenment has nothing to do with the person who is Enlightened. In contrast, Andrew asserts that the full and complete identification with one's Enlightenment is actually an expression of perfect non-dualism. Andrew talked with Ganga about this, using the examples of the Buddha and Jesus. Ganga, however, goes so far as to imply that even the Buddha himself had "landed" when he boldly declared, "I am the Enlightened One." Similarly about Jesus, to quote from the discussion:

**A:** *When Jesus said, "I and the Father are one," had he landed? He was just expressing his experience, his understanding.*

**G:** *Well, if he had said, "I and my Father are one," and he means I, Jesus Christ,*

*continued on page 14*



and not you Matthew, Mark or who the rest of them were, then he had landed, quite simply. If he had said "I" as the only "I," "I and the Father are one," it doesn't mean he and his father are one.

A: Of course it does, of course it does....He was saying they were one and the same.

G: Well, then that's a landing.

A: How could it be a landing? He was just declaring what his identity was.

G: If it excludes anyone else, any other "I," it's a landing.

A: When he was going to the temple and overturned the tables and he was shouting at everybody inside for being hypocrites, he was saying, "You're a hypocrite and I'm not."

G: Yes, I would say that's a landing.

Surely, Jesus was not crucified for saying "All is one and one is All," but because he *did* proclaim fearlessly his own realization and was urging everybody to realize what he did. Ganga says that because Jesus boldly declared his human identity as not separate from his realization, he had therefore fallen! To say, "I and the Father are one," can be a bold statement of one's own realization of no-separation without it being a denial of the Absolute, non-dualistic truth that indeed Matthew, Mark and everybody else are also not separate from the Self.

The above excerpts are also very important because Ganga is illustrating another consequence of taking a fixed Absolute position, which is that you can't judge anyone by their behavior. Unable to fully comprehend the relationship between the Absolute and behavior, like others she rejects the possibility that the Absolute realization could be taught in such a way that it can be practically understood, recognized and practiced. Andrew stresses how important it is that the Absolute Realization be practically recognized and understood, otherwise there will always be the dangerous discrepancy between the inner realization and its outer ex-

## HAD THE BUDDHA LANDED?

"I am an All-transcender,  
an All-knower,  
Unsullied in all ideas,  
renouncing all,  
By craving's ceasing freed.  
And this I owe  
To my own wit.  
To whom should I concede it?

I have no teacher, and my like  
Exists nowhere in all the world  
With all its gods, because I have  
No person for my counterpart.  
I am the Teacher in the world  
Without a peer, accomplished, too,  
And I alone am quite enlightened,  
Quenched, whose fires are all extinct.  
I go to Kasi's city now  
To set the Wheel of Law  
In motion: in a blindfold world  
I go to beat the Deathless Drum."

from *The Life of the Buddha*  
according to the Pali Canon  
by Bhikkhu Nanamoli

pression; between the fact of profound realization and the clear and easily discernible manifestation of its impact on any individual. He points out again and again that behavior cannot be excluded from this recognition and in fact is the *only* way in the final analysis to discern depth of realization, understanding and Enlightenment.

G: I'm saying that if you manipulate or identify degrees of Enlightenment through behavior, your realization is not complete.

A: Why not? What's missing?

G: What's missing is still the realization that this idea of the doer is a thought and empty.

A: But the point is, what about in this world, in time?

G: No problem with it. It happens quite

naturally. It happens of its own accord.

A: Right. So then nothing matters, right?

G: Nothing matters in that sense.

A: Right, right, but stepping down from that place, stepping down from it -

G: I don't step down. Why step down?

A: Right, but it's impossible to discern anything then, because everything is nothing and nothing is everything.

G: And then where does that take you?

A: Well, it leads to being very stuck in an Absolute view, in an Advaita view.

Later Andrew pointed to the Buddha, who placed great emphasis on bringing the Absolute teachings into the practical, to the extent that he created a whole community for that purpose.

A: Well, what about what the Buddha did, he had a lot of ideas about how to make it practical....He arbitrated the behavior of his disciples.

G: So he was wrong. So what?

After the meeting, Andrew invited Ganga to join him in a public debate with an arbitrator to ensure that both parties would have to make sense. She declined, calling the idea of a debate "absurd." Nevertheless, the meeting served as a clear and fascinating illustration of how the Absolute view can be used as an avoidance of a full awakening, and to the transformation that is inseparable from that awakening. ♦

A.V.B., C.P., B.R.



# The Profound Implications of Not Being Lost in the Absolute View

*The following article discusses a fundamental aspect of Andrew's teaching that has engendered much controversy - that actions are an expression of one's understanding and that the depth of realization can be discerned by one's behavior. It questions the misunderstood "Absolutist" view that as a result of the realization of one's ultimate non-existence, one is beyond the laws of karma. In Andrew's experience, real Enlightenment brings one to an even more acute awareness of the laws of human existence and thus to a deeper consciousness of the effects of one's actions in the world.*

PERHAPS the most controversial of Andrew's views on Enlightenment has to do with the relationship of Enlightenment to behavior. Although the fact that Enlightenment should be expressed in how a person behaves is obvious to most people, many long-term seekers and spiritual teachers disagree - "What does behavior have to do with Enlightenment?" they say. "That's just religion, that's just morality and ethics, that is all a creation of the mind and has nothing to do with freedom, with the transcendent realization of the Absolute, which

transcends good and bad." But as discussed in the previous articles about the Advaita or Absolute view, while it is no doubt true that in the experience of Enlightenment there is the transcending of all relativity, and the transcending of the mind from which all relative distinctions emerge - with Enlightenment the relative *does not go away*. Like it or not, a person who has realized still does exist in space, in time, as a human being in this relative universe! Andrew's whole emphasis is that the depth of a person's Enlightenment is revealed in how they relate to this fact. This is where the whole issue of Enlightenment and action becomes very tricky, for it is at this point that many Enlightened teachers have jumped to the conclusion that because they have realized that they don't exist (i.e. there is no "I," there is no "doer"), this means that they, as human beings, are themselves beyond the laws of karma, of cause and effect, of action and reaction! To quote Andrew's own teacher, "Don't judge a teacher by what they do, only by what they say." This attitude or false conclusion has caused a tremendous amount of confusion for many seekers over the last twenty years

and has also created many mistaken ideas about what Enlightenment is. Andrew feels passionately that Enlightenment is not a ticket into a realm where nothing matters anymore and one can do whatever they feel like doing, because the Enlightened one is *more* aware of the laws that govern human existence, and so will be indeed more aware of the consequences of his or her actions in this world.

It is because of this understanding that Andrew insists that a sincere person take full responsibility for every aspect of their behavior and conduct - not as merely an exercise in morals - but because of his conviction and insight that one cannot separate one's understanding from one's action. Andrew feels that to say that Enlightenment only has to do with a particular insight or inner experience or understanding is to trivialize Enlightenment. Many people seem to want to limit the pursuit and discovery of the Absolute to a particular corner of their lives and not be too effected or challenged by what it is they find.

Andrew often says, "Everybody wants to get Enlightened but nobody wants to change;" and to leave behind or go beyond a fixed, Absolute view is to literally put one's life on the line, including all of one's actions and one's relationship to one's whole existence without the protection of any fixed conceptual or experiential framework whatsoever. The temptation to grasp such protection is great for seekers and finders alike. Not being lost in the Absolute view means having the courage to leave that insight or experience behind, and in that the challenge is not to allow oneself to be tempted into grabbing onto the Absolute view as a way to avoid, dismiss or justify relative weaknesses, excesses and mistakes. With this kind of perfect commitment, absolute choicelessness and purity of intention, nothing can be avoided and all will be seen and understood within the realm of the Absolute without the Absolute itself being used as an escape from reality. ♦

B.R.

## From *The Ox and the Herdsman*, A Chinese Zen Text

Only when he has exhausted all his possibilities and taken one further step beyond, does the nature of this truth appear. This becoming present is "satori" or "kensho", that is to say seeing into the original nature. The world of freedom and detachment opens, a world that is totally detached from all morality and reason, right and wrong, good and bad, error and awakening, gain and loss and even from all Buddhas and devils. Here a person acts freely without being conscious of acting....

If a person treasures each being then he remains caught in the being for just that reason and lets himself be tricked by words and speech. Even if, for example, he saw into his original nature and reached the region beyond all laws and rules but remained to the slightest degree attached to such an awakening, then he would fall into the trap that has just been mentioned. Even when one becomes aware that in the final truth everything is in-comprehensible this in-comprehensibility itself must not remain.... We must jump first into the last region of this nature so as to return, transformed, to the world of beings. Even if we believed in the genuine Zen truth that was transmitted from Sakyamuni to Kasyapa and always thought about this transmission it would continue to be utterly empty and useless, as long as we did not try to experience it ourselves. In total detachment from Buddhas and devils we must acquire the ability to say a great yes to the world of the absolute and the world of the relative, as well as to the Buddhas and also the devils.

*translated by M.H. Trevor*

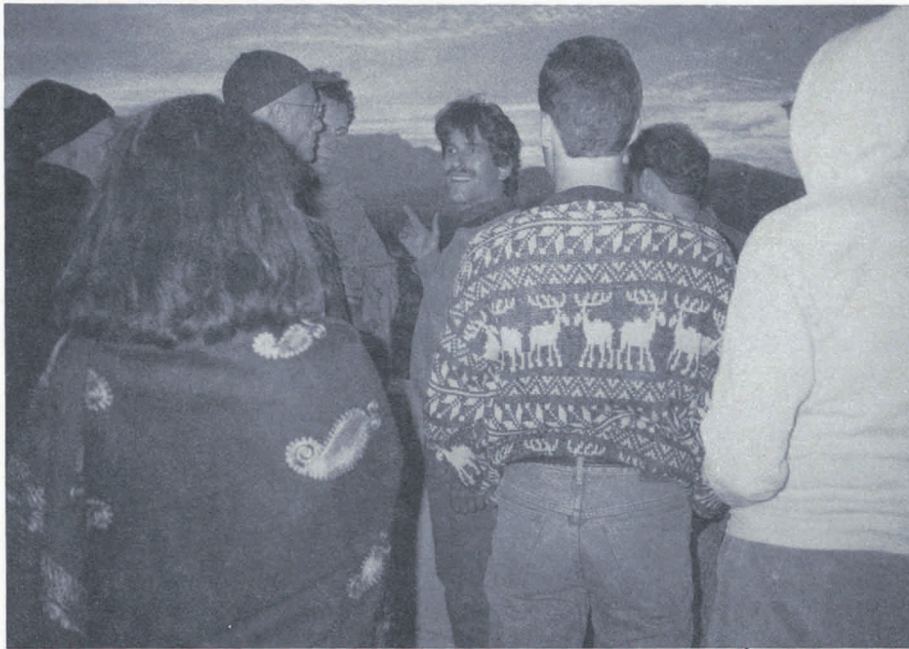


# What is Sangha?

by Andrew Cohen

*During Andrew's almost six years of teaching, a community of formal students has developed around him. Initially this was not planned or arranged, it was simply a natural response to his teaching. Some find hard to understand the power of the enthusiasm and commitment in many of his students. Andrew has come to realize that few truly understand what a Sangha is and what it actually means. In the following article, Andrew talks about what a real Sangha is, and in light of this, what its significance and evolutionary implications are. He describes how his Sangha came into being, his observations about the way in which it serves his students and what it truly means to live the holy life.*

DURING the first three years of my teaching people gathered around me. As I went from place to place, many wanted to come along. I didn't object. I didn't get involved. I only did not resist the powerful force that was drawing these people together and that inspired so many individuals to want to be together in this way. The love, joy and profound clarity that was being shared created an environment where an extraordinary and ecstatic intimacy was being discovered. The manifestation of that intimacy is the expression of the sacred and a knowing of that which is impersonal. At a certain point I realized that this that was manifesting around me was part and parcel of what I was teaching and



what I was being. I came to accept it. At that point I started to get very involved with the group of people that had come to gather around me. Before this I had resisted doing so, but when I finally accepted that this was part of my teaching, part of my destiny, a lot changed very quickly. I started demanding that people live up to what they had realized. All of my students had had very profound experiences - but at that point, the main thing I became interested in was that they were able to live and express the knowledge that was revealed to them in those experiences, in who they were. When I began teaching I was very excited that people were having these experiences. Like firecrackers,

one after the other, they would experience intense awakening and profound insight. Big changes began to happen spontaneously, and many of them would start speaking about the Absolute with a shocking clarity and precision. At the beginning that was more

than enough for me. I was thrilled by that. But over time I started to realize that in fact, in spite of these experiences, there still seemed to be a gap between what these people had realized and how they were living their lives. Confusion was still being actively expressed, and in this I could see that in spite of the profound awakenings that many of them had known and were knowing,

varying degrees of delusion and ignorance still had not been seen through. That's when I realized that the explosions were not enough. These explosions, which were being called Enlightenment, are only the beginning of the spiritual life. They are the end of seeking, because one becomes a finder at that point - because everything that one has been looking for has been found and every question has been answered. But even after many people have discovered a reality that is infinite and that they have no doubt exists, they, I have found, usually still remain prey to ignorant tendencies. It was because of this that I realized that the explosion of Enlightenment is usually only the beginning of awakening.

A Sangha is a community of finders. A finder means someone who has had an explosive realization of the Self. A Sangha is a group of people who have come together for the sole purpose of giving themselves as individuals utterly to being completely Free. In that complete giving they are committed to

*continued on page 18*

*At least there must be a few people, individuals who are seriously and with complete intent, aware of the nature of their psyche and of society and of the necessity of inwardly bringing about a total revolution - that is, no longer living in violence, in hatred, in antagonism, in merely pursuing every form of entertainment and pleasure. What we are concerned about is to see if as individuals we can bring about in ourselves that quality of seriousness which in itself, through awareness of one's own nature, brings about a revolution.*

J. Krishnamurti



"The Guru is a very wide dimension of consciousness appearing to be located to a person. It is like a high voltage current passing through a copper wire. The copper wire is only the visible thing before you, but it is charged with something which is far beyond the limitations of a copper wire. Ten thousand volts, ten thousand volts may be passing through there. So ten thousand volts of consciousness are passing through his personality though the volts cannot be seen. You only see the copper wire."

Swami Krishnananda in a talk with Andrew's students,  
February 1991, Rishikesh, India

## Excerpts from *Letters of Love*

Beloved Master,

I am like a dying star, collapsing upon itself in a giant cosmic implosion, every bit of its separate existence transformed into something inseparable from the Absolute. As the force of that implosion leads inexorably to my total destruction, the light of your blessing is radiating back out. The Enlightenment is no longer my own. I am experiencing this in a very real way. My perspective is continually opening up to encompass the totality of existence and I am lost in that totality, no longer to be found....

Love, Bob

---

Dear Andrew,

Something has exploded inside my chest and there has been a shift. Each breath comes to me, each breath seems to come from my heart - it's even a physical sensation in my chest, like I can't control my breathing anymore. I can't control anything, or rather there is no need to control, there is no fear. I see it manifesting in my relationships with people, somehow I don't feel the separation anymore. It feels like one and so natural and warm and quiet - so love full! Within my chest is often a gurgling joy which just rolls out. It is not me - it rolls between me and other people, through me and through other people and it is something that could never be held, or controlled or reproduced, it feels like the other side, just completely something beyond what I could ever create. Andrew it is just beautiful, being is just beautiful and there is just love in this.

Oh Andrew, how can I ever ever thank you?

I saw in a flash that this is how it has always been - it was a very fast flash in light, as if for a second the earth opened up and the inside was revealed. There is a big warmth, a burning in my chest - my chest has cracked and opened. For this, for you I have always longed, all my life. Thank You thank you, I have always known somewhere, but been blind, you have given me sight - it really feels like this.

Kirstie

Beloved Master,

After Satsang, the incredible impact becomes more and more intense, it's 2 a.m., and the brain feels like it's being destroyed, as if it's liquefying, a tremendous power annihilates it, the ears are pounded by this storm, the teeth feel as if they're dissolving. It must be what Krishnamurti used to say about mutation of the brain cells. The nervous system can't take this. All fuses are blown in the face of the Supreme mystery. Lost in the Nameless.

This is absolute peace, Love, cessation, silence, bliss, and it is also cataclysmic energy, destroying everything, and it is creation, and it is life itself, and it is death. An all-consuming fire leaving no ashes.

And it is a total mystery, always past understanding, beyond, beyond.

The next day it continues unabated, the mind hardly able to function, and totally incapable of having the slightest handle on what's happening. I am speechless by the cosmic significance and synchronicity of events, prostrating in awe before You.

Yours, Chris

---

Beloved Master,

As I was driving home yesterday after a busy day of coming and going and working I stopped at a traffic light and all of a sudden it felt like my head was gone. All there was was the space in my heart, which was so vast and still. I knew that I really hadn't done anything or been anywhere, ever, because all that was really happening was this incredible expanse and stillness. The beauty and preciousness of this awareness is so overwhelming - everything melts away in this knowing, in this movement which is no movement.

I feel like I'm floating down a river, and all there is to do is surrender to the beauty.

I love you, Julie



*The ideal attainment is what I'm trying to teach, but someone is going to have to make room for that kind of knowledge. To make room for that kind of knowledge the infantile and adolescent "I have to be able to do whatever I want whenever I want to do it" kind of Enlightenment, kind of foolishness has to be discarded. One has to be willing to ask, "What is the way of things?" beyond only what "I" want. "What is the way of nature? If there is a law in nature itself, what is it? Let me know it." When you discover what that law is within yourself and then naturally abide by it, there is a tremendous nobility and dignity.*

*The essence of what I'm teaching goes way beyond being responsible only for yourself. What it is that I'm pointing to begins to reveal itself only when you have realized the profound implications of every action that's taken. Then a vast perspective, unimaginable for most who are so lost only in the personal, will begin to reveal itself, and when this revelation becomes a static condition - not only a fleeting insight - you will no longer be able to avoid the profound responsibility that this knowledge is. You will then be standing alone just like Jesus did, saying, "I know." That's why he was crucified. He transcended the scriptures because he became the source itself. Anybody who even begins to get near what I'm pointing to has so much responsibility for that fact. That means that they will not be able to compromise in the way they live their life. It's very powerful. That is why I get into a lot of difficulty - because of this stand. I can't compromise it for anybody, even for my own teacher. I can't do it - because I know it's true. How can I compromise on this if it's true? I can't. I have to surrender to it. Don't you see what's implied in all this? It's revolutionary. Do you see what I'm saying? The world is completely destroyed in this - it's beyond just some experience of dissolution. The world is destroyed and it's re-created - in you! Do you get my point?*

Andrew Cohen

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## Death of a Vipassana Meditator

*continued from page 11*

away. I had always thought I was pretty intense about my spiritual life, but in this setting I felt like I was just trying to keep up. I did not always comprehend what was happening or how it was being expressed. I was often intimidated by the seriousness with which everyone took the life they were living. I wanted to be serious but on my own terms. When it sank in how much my limits were being challenged, I became afraid and I began to doubt the purity of the situation rather than my own ideas about what was actually happening. By doubting my own experience in this way, I was threatening the unbearable delicacy of the deep understanding that was beginning to unfold and the commitment I had made to myself.

I didn't know which way to go. My past had been destroyed and continuing on meant passing through this fire. That which only weeks earlier I had called my own heart's desire now felt unbearably hot. I resorted to the most primitive instincts of self-preservation: to defend myself, to run, anything to escape the intensity of my feelings. Nothing in my practice of meditation or my years of therapy prepared me for what I had to do: be courageous in the midst of uncertainty, surrender to the unknown in the face of fear. Would my realization and desire for truth set me free, or would my conditioned response draw me back to the world? It was the battle of an enlightened heart and an ignorant mind, and the heart prevailed. I now knew with certainty that my mind was not interested in enlightenment and never had and never could make me truly happy. These were my first steps toward a mature and complete humanity. To a place where there is no question of Dharma in every day life, because Dharma is all there is, ever was, and ever could be. ♦

## What is Sangha?

*continued from page 16*

being rid of anything that could ever interfere with the perfect expression of perfect Enlightenment and perfect Liberation. That's the meaning of Sangha. A Sangha is not a community of fellow seekers but a community of fellow finders. When fellow finders come together, what is being shared is the end of seeking and the end of waiting. When a person comes to the end of seeking and the end of waiting, something changes inside, the chemistry changes. Tremendous joy and profound trust in life itself is realized when one has truly found what one has been looking for. Why would people choose to come together in this way? For the utter joy of it, for the ecstasy of it and for the preciousness of being in a situation where there wouldn't be any hindrance to being completely Free - where there wouldn't be any hindrance to the perfect spontaneity of being truly awake. Where Freedom is being lived for its own sake and not for any other reason or for any other end whatsoever. That is a very rare event. Most spiritual communities or monastic settings are situations where individuals come together to try to attain something. It is very different when a group of people who have found what they have been looking for come together simply to manifest that finding for its own purpose. The realization, expression and manifestation of perfect purity for its own sake is unusual and evolutionary. When the motivation of one's entire existence is utterly dedicated to the manifestation and expression of that perfect purity, any and every obstacle to that perfection will be destroyed simply through the love for, devotion to, and contemplation of that perfect purity. That is the meaning of the holy life: when there is no wanting, no waiting and no seeking. Then and only then, can that which has been found begin to express itself in an utterly natural and perfectly spontaneous manner to such a degree that everything is always unknown, fresh and timeless. It is a situation where nothing can grow old because the essence of one's being is being lived, which is no time, no birth and no death. ♦



## 1992 TEACHING SCHEDULE OF ANDREW COHEN

Bodhgaya, Bihar, India	January 1992
Kathmandu, Nepal	February 1992
Corte Madera, California, U.S.A.	March - June 1992*
London, England	June - July 1992
Amsterdam, Holland	July 1992
Bern, Switzerland	July - August 1992

\*Andrew will also be teaching in Boulder and Seattle during this time.

For more information contact Moksha Foundation.

## MOKSHA FOUNDATION BOOKS & AUDIO/VIDEO TAPES

### BOOKS by Andrew Cohen

#### *Enlightenment Is a Secret*

We are very excited to announce the publication of this much awaited book of Andrew's teachings. (Softcover \$14.95 + shipping. Hardcover \$19.95 + shipping.)

#### *Autobiography of an Awakening*

This book is a powerful and intimate autobiographical account of Andrew's life. It describes his rigorous search for transformation, his explosive awakening and the evolution of his teaching. (\$10.95 + shipping.)

#### *Letters of Love*

This book consists of letters written to Andrew from his students. It is testimony to the profound impact that Andrew has had on those who have spent time with him and to the timeless ecstatic nature of Enlightened revelation. (\$10.95 + shipping.)

### AUDIO AND VIDEO TAPES

There has been a great deal of interest in the audios and videos we have produced this year. Many people have expressed how much they have benefited from these tapes. In fact, the response has been so positive that we have decided to make available on a continuing basis both audio and video tapes of Satsang. As the catalogue of audio and video tapes is constantly expanding, please contact the Moksha office for additional information.

Videos need to be transferred to the European system in order to be played on most European VCRs before using. We can transfer video tapes to the European system for an additional U.S. \$30. For foreign payments please send international money order in U.S. dollars.

The following is a list of the audio and video tapes available for ordering.

### Video Tapes - \$40 each + shipping

V110	<i>Enlightenment is the Beginning of Spiritual Life</i>	Bodhgaya, India	January 30, 1991
V111	<i>The Great Sacrifice</i>	Bodhgaya, India	January 31, 1991
V130	<i>Enlightenment is Not a Personal Matter</i>	Seattle, WA	October 13, 1991
V145	<i>The Burning of Karma</i>	Corte Madera, CA	November 23, 1991
V150	<i>Radical Objectivity</i>	Seattle, WA	December 5, 1991

### Audio Tapes - \$10 each + shipping

A108	<i>Clarity of Intention</i>	Bodhgaya, India	January 28, 1991
A120	<i>The Fire of Liberation</i>	Seattle, WA	May 14, 1991
A125	<i>No Longer a Victim of Destiny</i>	London, England	July 2, 1991
A135	<i>Enlightenment for Its Own Sake</i>	Boulder, CO	September 18, 1991
A151	<i>Absolute Commitment Destroys the Ego</i>	Seattle, WA	December 6, 1991

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# Calvin and Hobbes

by Bill Watterson



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MOKSHA FOUNDATION  
39 Edison Avenue  
Corte Madera, CA, U.S.A. 94925

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