

WHAT IS *E*NLIGHTENMENT?

Volume 3, Number 2

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July 1994

"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 publish this journal 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

COME TOGETHER

**Who Has the Courage to
Stand Alone/Together
in the Truth?**



IN THIS ISSUE

WHAT IS THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE of Enlightenment? Too often the investigation of this question stops with the attainment of the individual alone. In this age of heightened global awareness, when the ecology of the Amazon rainforest deeply concerns residents of Vermont and instant communication makes us apprehensive of political events on the other side of the world, to say that we are all interconnected sounds almost like a truism. Yet many spiritual aspirants consider their path to be a purely personal matter, having to do with "my" realization, "my" evolution and "my" attainment. But what about other people, what about the rest of the world? In the realm of spiritual discourse and investigation, while lip service is often given to the fact of our unity, few seem to seriously consider what this may really imply for spirituality altogether. Does Enlightenment have a significance that goes beyond the individual? How does it manifest in relationship with others? And what meaning might its manifestation hold for a humanity that, despite great advances in technology and learning, often seems to be little above the wolf pack or the herd in its social relations? This issue of *What Is Enlightenment?* is dedicated to widening the focus and deepening the understanding of Enlightenment's significance by inquiring into what can be the most powerful manifestation of an evolutionary alternative to the norms of conflict, division and mistrust so prevalent in the world: true spiritual community. With this edition *What Is Enlightenment?* continues its commitment to inquiring into the most important issues facing modern spirituality. As always, we welcome and invite your comments and responses. H.B.

4

COME TOGETHER: WHO HAS THE COURAGE TO STAND ALONE/TOGETHER IN THE TRUTH?

BY ANDREW COHEN

6

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

DEATH OF A SERIOUS SEEKER:
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT
BY SHANTI ADAMS

12

THE DISCOVERY OF A BIGGER VIEW

BY ANDREW COHEN

16

SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY: BEYOND PERSONAL LIBERATION

EXCERPTS FROM A TALK GIVEN
BY ANDREW COHEN AT ESALEN INSTITUTE

19

ECSTATIC INTIMACY

BY ANDREW COHEN

20

THE JEWEL NET OF INDRA

BY FRANCIS H. COOK

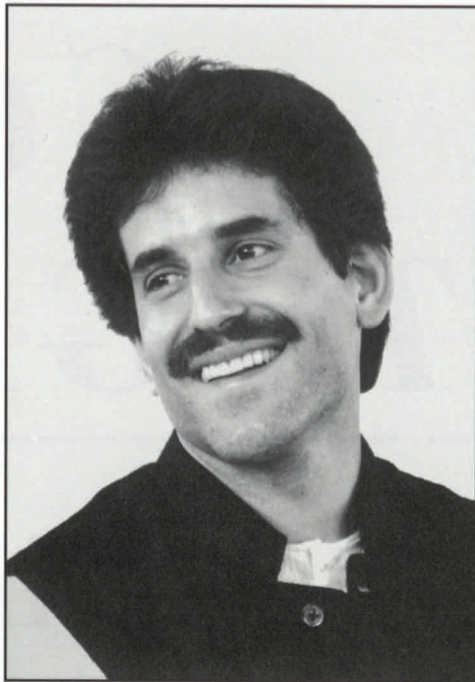
22

PARALLELS

24

DO YOU BELIEVE IN FAIRIES? A VISIT TO THE FINDHORN COMMUNITY

BY BARBARA WALDORF



SPIRITUAL TEACHER and author Andrew Cohen was born in New York City in 1955. He began teaching in 1986 after a profound spiritual awakening deeply transformed his life. What makes Andrew such a unique and powerful voice in the modern spiritual world is his absolute and unwavering pursuit of what is actually true. In his attempt to come to a fully comprehensive and utterly unambiguous understanding of the enlightened condition, he continuously reveals and calls into

question ideas and beliefs that have gradually become the status quo in the modern spiritual arena.

For the past eight years Andrew has been traveling throughout North America, Europe and Asia to teach. In his quest to deepen his understanding of the awakened condition he has initiated meetings with spiritual teachers from many different traditions and spoken with countless spiritual seekers. His intention has been and continues to be, to inspire others into a profound discovery of and passionate investigation into the Real.

Andrew stresses that success in the spiritual pursuit is entirely dependent upon the depth and seriousness of one's intention to be free, and that spiritual life is not a casual endeavor but demands great maturity and commitment. He speaks constantly about the importance of realizing an *objective* perspective which reaches beyond the limitations of individual preferences and beliefs. He claims, in fact, that an end to the conflict and division within and between human beings depends upon the realization of and abidance in such a view. Andrew's teaching has always been characterized by the continuous momentum with which it presses beyond established boundaries. It is considered radical by many, perhaps because of its directness, immediacy and uncompromising call to awaken that challenges anyone who truly wants to be free.

Presently based in northern California with his largest community of students, Andrew spends the majority of his time on the road teaching, his extended community reaching throughout the world. In the last two years, in response to Andrew's clarity and inspiration, new centers dedicated to the investigation of his revolutionary message have formed in Canada, England, Holland, Israel and the United States.

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Sri Aurobindo, "The Ideal of Human Unity," *Social and Political Thought*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1971, p. 554; Wendell Berry, *The Wild Birds*, San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985, p. 136; Albert Einstein, "The Goal of Human Existence," *Albert Einstein on Humanism*, New York: Citadel Press, 1993, pp. 106-107; J. Krishnamurti, *On Relationship*, San Francisco: Harper, 1992, pp. 14-15; Lee Lozowick, *Living God Blues*, Prescott Valley: Hohm Press, 1984, p. 142.

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THE FEAR OF ONENESS, the fear of true intimacy, is the fear of absolute relatedness. The pursuit of spiritual freedom is the pursuit of the direct experience of absolute relatedness. And it is the fear of the uncompromising intimacy of absolute relatedness that is the crux of the spiritual predicament of the human race.

Initially the journey to liberation seems to be one of *exclusion*. As the seeker begins to look beyond the known, asking themselves for the first time what is real and what is true, they often find that many of the ideas they have had about their own identity are false and empty of substance. They may even temporarily glimpse the fact that *all* of the ideas they have held about their own identity are false, revealing that emptiness itself, unadorned by any notions of a personal self, is their true nature. In this way a sincere investigation suddenly or gradually reveals to the seeker that many of the conclusions they have held to be true about the nature of reality as a whole were based only on a shallow and superficial investigation into the nature of their own experience. This kind of discovery can be explosive, and in light of it, like old clothes that no longer fit, old ideas and conclusions are discarded, leaving room for that which is new, fresh and unknown.

This process usually continues. In time, more subtle ideas and conclusions are seen through, found to be false and empty of substance, making even more room for that which is new, fresh and unknown. The experience of freedom from false and wrong views can be intoxicating and profoundly liberating. Seeing the emptiness of many ideas about the nature of one's identity directly reveals to the seeker, now finder, the actual possibility of living a life of glorious simplicity and true love, free from the limiting bonds of fear and attachment.

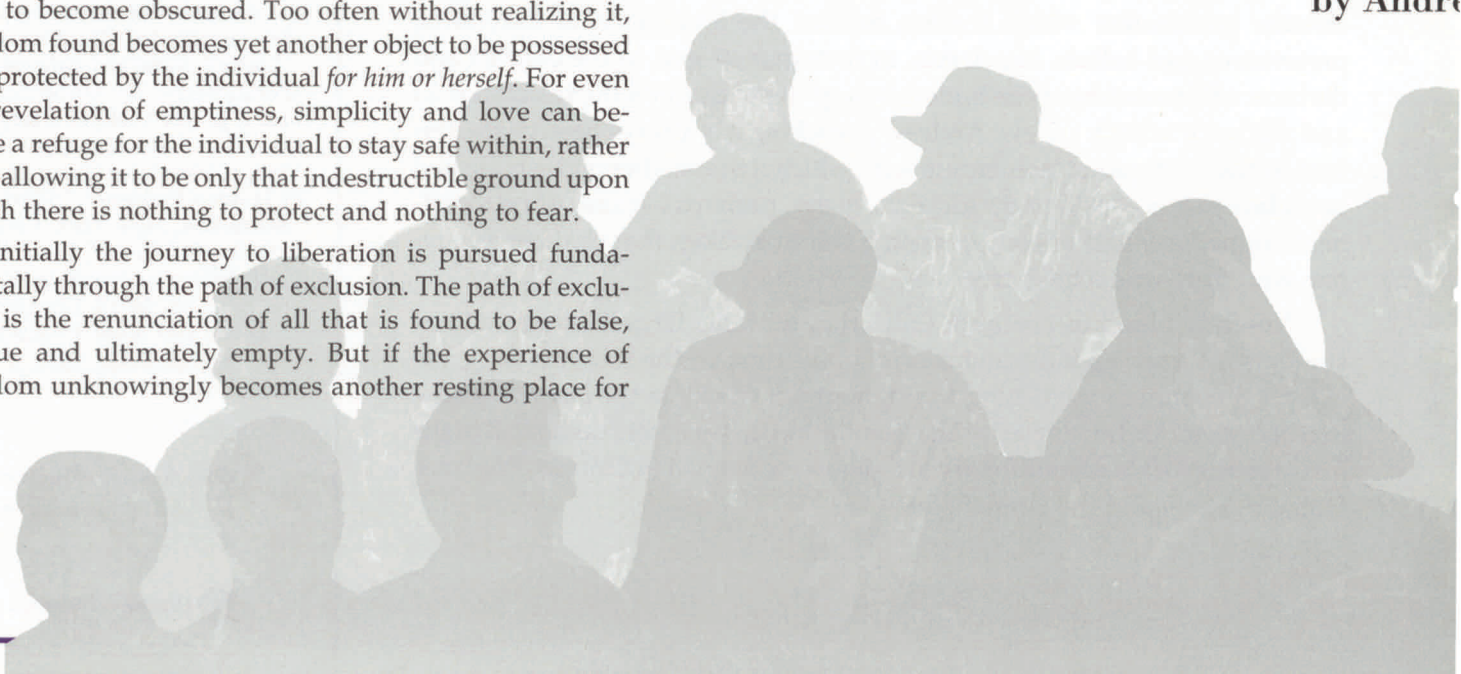
But because of the tendency in most human beings to overpersonalize the drama of the spiritual journey, even deeper levels of insight into the empty nature of the personal self and final liberation from the need to protect it can tend to become obscured. Too often without realizing it, freedom found becomes yet another object to be possessed and protected by the individual *for him or herself*. For even the revelation of emptiness, simplicity and love can become a refuge for the individual to stay safe within, rather than allowing it to be only that indestructible ground upon which there is nothing to protect and nothing to fear.

Initially the journey to liberation is pursued fundamentally through the path of exclusion. The path of exclusion is the renunciation of all that is found to be false, untrue and ultimately empty. But if the experience of freedom unknowingly becomes another resting place for

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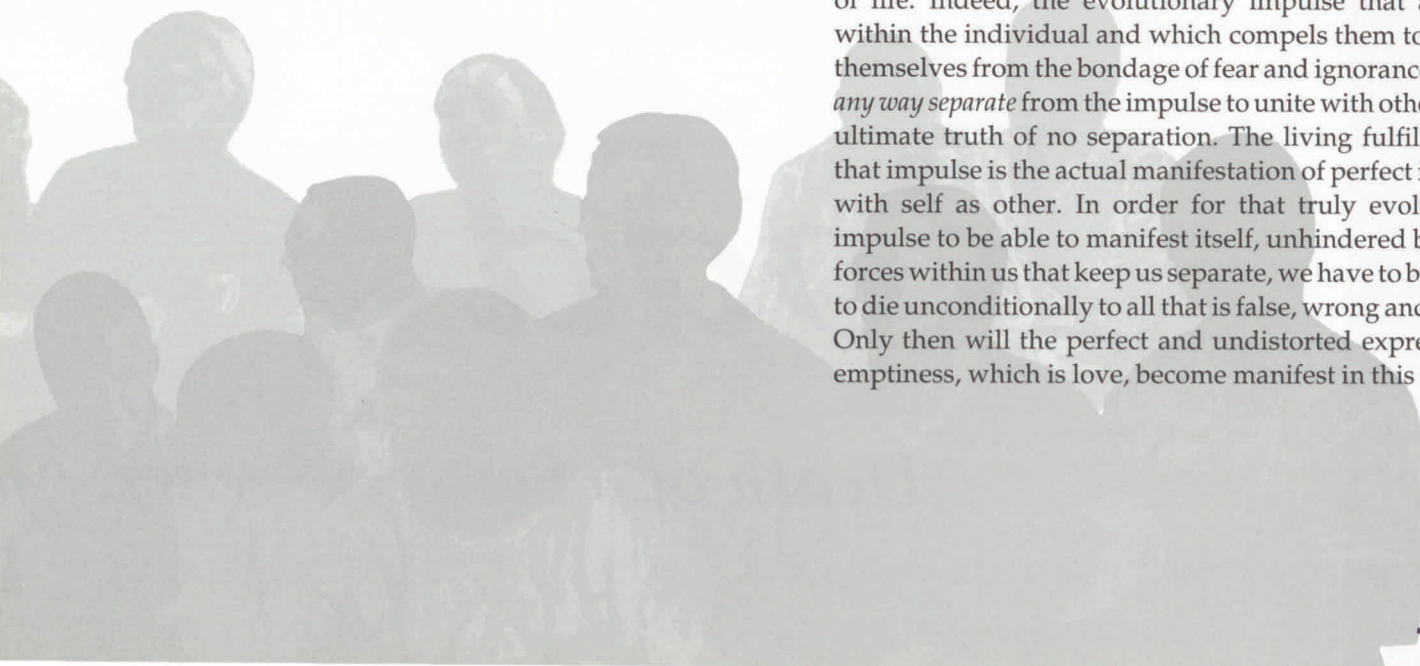
Has Ibragim to e/Together Truth?

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the one who has found it, that resting place itself becomes yet another wall of separation. Indeed, as long as the individual experiences any need whatsoever to protect their individuality, that indestructible ground upon which there is nothing to protect and nothing to fear has not yet truly been found. The initial revelation of emptiness and the experience of freedom from many of the false and wrong conclusions about the nature of one's own identity do not automatically result in final emancipation. In fact, for most individuals a huge chasm continues to exist between the initial experiential realization of emptiness and that individual's capacity to perfectly manifest that realization in the unshakable knowledge that there is truly no longer anything to protect or anything to fear.

The path of exclusion which initially led to the first realization of emptiness can, if the individual allows themselves to take a position in it, become that refuge in which they still find a place to remain separate. For the realization of emptiness of personal self not to become yet another safe refuge that the last traces of any need to be separate can survive in, the path of exclusion must finally fall away, choicelessly becoming the path of *inclusion*. Why? Because the discovery of the empty nature of the personal self is the realization of the ultimate nondifference between self and other. In the realization of self as other, the finder choicelessly practices the inclusion of the other as self as the natural expression of that realization. Inclusion becomes unavoidable when one lets go unconditionally in response to the realization of one's true nature as empty of personal self. In inclusion, no room exists for the individual to remain separate. In fact, the expression of the final burning away of the last traces of the need to remain separate is the choiceless recognition of and response to the other as oneself.

In the discovery of one's true nature, a thrilling and extraordinary intimacy with oneself is experienced and simultaneously recognized as a profound intimacy with all of life. Indeed, the evolutionary impulse that awakens within the individual and which compels them to liberate themselves from the bondage of fear and ignorance is *not in any way separate* from the impulse to unite with others in the ultimate truth of no separation. The living fulfillment of that impulse is the actual manifestation of perfect intimacy with self as other. In order for that truly evolutionary impulse to be able to manifest itself, unhindered by all the forces within us that keep us separate, we have to be willing to die unconditionally to all that is false, wrong and untrue. Only then will the perfect and undistorted expression of emptiness, which is love, become manifest in this world. ■



The Long and Winding Road

FROM THE FIRST DAY Andrew Cohen entered my life, I was fascinated and thrilled by his undeniable clarity and fiery passion for the truth. It rang a long-forgotten note inside me. My husband, on returning from a recent trip to India where he had met Andrew, had invited him to England to teach. He was now staying with us in Devon.

Very quickly each evening the living room of our small, stone cottage began to fill with people, seekers curious and eager to meet this unusual young man from New York who reportedly had not only attained Enlightenment, but possessed the rare ability to awaken others. Word had spread in the surrounding community of my husband's experiences in India and of the obvious changes in him through his association with Andrew. Within days it was apparent that something extraordinary was taking place. Night after night our small cottage rocked with explosive realization as people, through their questions and dialogues with Andrew, began to open up and spontaneously let go in the most profound way possible. The atmosphere was electric, charged with the thrill of the unknown and an intimacy that was almost tangible.

Although I found his presence thrilling, at the same time I felt strangely uneasy and I kept myself on the sidelines. As I looked at my husband, whose countenance was radiant, I recognized a fire in his eyes, the glow of an awakened passion and conviction that I had not seen in him for years. I knew that I too had once shared that passion.

Images of the past twelve years floated before me and my mind went back to where it all began.

Death of a Serious Seeker: An

IN THE LATE SPRING OF 1975, during my first year in India, I traveled to a small town called Manali situated 4,000 feet up in the Himalayas in the beautiful Kulu valley. There the air was filled with the scent of pine needles mingled with the smell of the wood burning fires from the local tea shops.

During my first few days I unexpectedly discovered that a meditation retreat was being held further up on the mountain. I was told that visitors could go in the evenings to listen to the discourses given there. I made my way up the mountain that night. On entering the meditation room, softly lit with kerosene lamps, I observed twenty to thirty silent figures sitting on the floor cross-legged, wrapped in woollen shawls. The atmosphere was strikingly still and peaceful. A young western Buddhist monk sat at the front of the room. After ten minutes of silence he began to speak. The topic was "Inner Freedom." He spoke clearly and unfalteringly, with an unmistakably English accent. To my surprise, he boldly asserted with utmost sincerity that inner freedom, that mysterious jewel, man's ultimate goal, was utterly attainable here and now. I sat riveted, oblivious to the cramping in my legs. I don't know how I knew, but I knew that what he was saying was true. I returned each evening for a week. His message had a powerful effect, suddenly defining my somewhat vague spiritual aspirations. By the end of the week I signed up for his next retreat.

Little did I know that this was the first step in what would become years of singular dedication to the pursuit of liberation. The young monk's name was Luong Pe. During my first retreat with him, amidst the monotony of intense boredom and flights of fierce restlessness, I experienced for the first time moments of deep peace and effortless clarity. When the first twenty days of retreat came to an end, sensing I was on the brink of something extraordinary, I jumped at the chance of doing another, more extended retreat with him.

One month later I found myself on a beautiful ridge with breathtaking views high above the noisy

bazaars of Dalhousie. About forty of us rented three large wooden houses which served as our retreat center for the next four months. Under the guidance and unwavering encouragement of Luong Pe, who had now become our teacher, we immersed ourselves in intensive meditation practice and inquiry. Weeks gradually dissolved into months and as our practice deepened, the world seemed to recede farther and farther into the background. Sitting on that mountaintop, gazing down on the valleys below submerged beneath swirling monsoon mists, it felt as if we had entered another dimension where time and our personal histories had vanished. There was a luminous quality to this dimension. Living and practicing intimately together, day after day, a remarkable atmosphere developed in the group. Although we were from different countries, with different backgrounds and different life stories, we were drawn together through our fascination with and desire for this mysterious jewel called Enlightenment. This mutual goal and our undivided dedication to it not only united us in a powerful way but seemed to ennoble us, lifting us out of the petty, selfish preoccupations that generally divide people. An extraordinary intimacy, joy and seriousness pervaded the group throughout the retreats. It was as if we met, at least temporarily, in something far beyond ourselves, and in this tasted the marvelous possibility of life unfettered by personal preoccupation. At one point our teacher, himself inspired by this phenomenon unfolding before him, spoke of the possibility of starting a community in the West solely dedicated to Enlightenment and living a spiritual life. In retrospect none of us fully realized or appreciated the significance and rarity of what had occurred between us. Those months in Dalhousie had a profound impact on me. A deep conviction had taken root that the genuine attainment of liberation was without a doubt the most important goal in life.

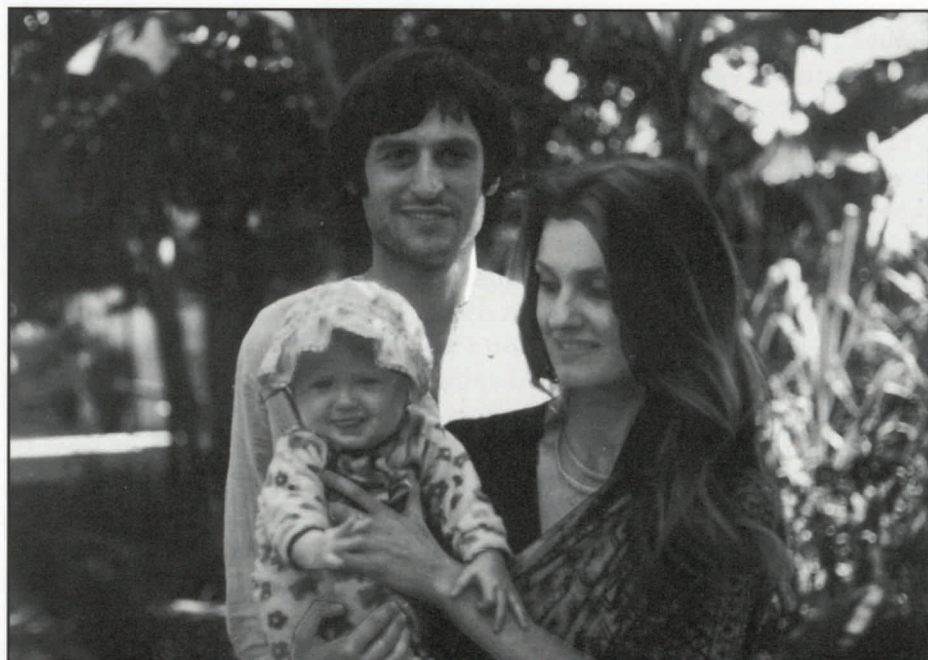
For the next three years I lived in south India near the ashram of Sri Ramana Maharshi. It was

Autobiographical Account by Shanti Adams

there that I met up with my future husband, who had also been part of the group in Dalhousie. We found in each other a mutual intensity for spiritual practice and inquiry, and spent long hours engaged in passionate debate over Ramana's teachings and our meditation practice. Often, after circumambulating the sacred mountain which loomed above the ashram, we would end up at dawn, sitting in a tiny tea shop still engaged in endless exploration. Our growing friendship only fueled our passion for liberation. Living in two small thatched huts, we supported each other in doing long weeks of solitary meditation during which each of us provided food for the other. Spurred on by our deepening experience and by each other's enthusiasm, we seemed to have endless energy for meditation, often sitting for sixteen hours or more a day. My body became highly sensitized, experiencing sounds as delicate as the flight of a bird as strong physical sensations. High levels of concentration would at times produce explosive insight. However, over time it became clear that these experiences were not enough. Within weeks or even days of emerging from retreat, this delicious, heightened state of consciousness that we were experiencing would soon subside. Gradually it became apparent that no deep or permanent transformation was occurring and that we were in need of further guidance. We began to seek out reportedly enlightened teachers and sadhus.

For five years we traveled the length and breadth of India, sometimes alone, sometimes together, but always sharing our experiences and always urging each other further on. During that time we met some of the greatest and some of the most obscure spiritual teachers of this century. At times as a result of these encounters I would experience rapturous ecstasy and profound states of nondual consciousness, which would last for days, sometimes weeks at a time. However, without exception these precious glimpses of freedom faded. My husband had the same experience and we both noticed that our meditations began to change. They were no longer as fresh and revelatory as they had been in the past. For myself, I now felt that rather than being on the brink of the unknown as before, I was always trying to recapture something. There was no doubt in either of our minds that something fundamental was still missing.

In the fall of 1978 we had a child together. We continued however to live the homeless life, taking turns caring for the baby as we alternated being on retreat. But it was different now; it had become more of a lifestyle. Each January we would make a pilgrimage to Bodhgaya, the site of the Buddha's Enlightenment, to organize a retreat for Luong Pe, who had now disrobed. Ever since his first year teaching in India, this had become an annual event. Through him we kept up contact with our old friends and discovered that he had already started the community in England that he had envisioned years before in Dalhousie. Aware that we had reached a spiritual plateau, we were attracted by his inspiring descriptions of communal life in the West. These, along with our own memories of the



Bodhgaya, India, 1979

magical time we had all spent together on retreat, led us after much consideration to finally leave India and join the community in England. It felt like the beginning of a new chapter.

AS WE PULLED INTO THE DRIVEWAY of our new home and I glimpsed a group of familiar faces waving excitedly, my heart leapt. It was a joyous reunion. Our first few days in England passed in a haze of animated stories and endless cups of English tea. There were about twenty people living together in the community at the time, a large two-storied country house with three acres of gener-

ous grounds set in a storybook English village. It became apparent however, that in spite of the beautifully kept flower gardens, the huge, well-tended organic vegetable plot and the organized daily running of the community, a lot had changed since our days together in India. We were surprised to find the meditation room was hardly ever used and felt cold, bleak and uninviting. People no longer spoke about liberation or about the importance of being free, here and now in this life. In fact, the passion for going all the way and the conviction that this was possible seemed to have all but gone. In its place, issues such as choosing a line of "right livelihood" and working on relationships had become the priority. Worst of all, this shift of perspective was reflected in the community's central figure, Luong Pe himself. It seemed his fundamental interest and emphasis had shifted from the urgency of Enlightenment to green politics and the social ills of the world. I was shocked when the first dharma talk I listened to in the community was on the importance of giving up smoking. Topics of this nature appeared with increasing frequency in his talks. With such a loss of vision, an atmosphere of fragmentation and undercurrents of tension plagued the group. Even Luong Pe and his young female colleague, who had recently ended their relationship, were lost in personal conflict. There was no doubt this had a spiritually debilitating effect on the group. Although we came together for regular meetings there was hardly a trace of the intimacy or inspiration we had so effortlessly shared in Dalhousie together. The focus of these meetings rarely rose beyond the mundane details of living together. Endless hours were spent discussing interpersonal conflicts, which for the most part were never resolved.

Initially my husband and I were disillusioned and disoriented by the situation. Our first impulse was to leave and return to India. The reality of our financial situation, however, caused us to choose to stay and make the most of it. Overwhelmed by the practical responsibilities in our new life and afraid to challenge those we had respected in the past, we fell into compromise. Despite my acute discomfort, I gradually found myself fitting in. Without being aware of it, like those around me, I soon lost touch with my own passion and single-pointed desire for freedom. As the months passed, even the memories of the exquisite experience we had all shared together five years before faded, along with the vision of what was possible.

TWO YEARS LATER, along with several of the original members, we left the community and moved to the south-

west of England. There, unlike the conservative village we had left behind in Kent, the local town was unusual with its unapologetic alternative flavor. Local bulletin boards were bursting with courses, workshops and seminars of every spiritual and therapeutic ilk. We were captivated by this smorgasbord of alternative delights. Very quickly we rented houses in the area. There was an unspoken understanding among us that none of us wished to live under the same roof again. Unvoiced grievances had created separation and intolerance and many of us now secretly believed it was not possible to truly live together harmoniously. The irony of this in a group ostensibly concerned with truth, love and nonseparation did not occur to us. In fact, on the contrary, we still considered ourselves to be close friends and serious practitioners and a core group of us set about establishing a meditation retreat center in the area. Soon old friends appeared, returning from Thailand and India or visiting from the States to do retreats. Many ended up staying on and slowly a loosely knit community began to evolve. It felt like a new beginning. In the summers we would go together to the J. Krishnamurti gatherings held each year in Brockwood Park. There, sitting around campfires in the evenings, we would immerse ourselves in the thrill of dharma debate and discussion once again. The disappointments and bruises of the past two years had slowly faded; unfortunately so had the lessons. None of us really questioned the compromised condition we had come to accept, nor the apparent ineffectiveness of so many years of spiritual practice. What had it all amounted to? We never deeply considered the fact, nor the implications, of the failure of the spiritual community we had all left behind in Kent. Instead we were happy to forget it, like a bad dream.

FOUR YEARS LATER, through a strange twist of fate, it was the unexpected appearance of Andrew Cohen in our living room that threatened to rupture the bubble of delusion and spiritual stagnation that my life had become.

Ever since my days in the community in Kent, I learned to push aside feelings of discomfort as I drifted into an ever deepening state of compromise and complacency in my own life. I had joined the ubiquitous treadmill of retired seekers, doing several meditation retreats a year, making regular trips to India and combining therapy with meditation practice to try to bridge the gaps. Without realizing it, the glorious possibility of true freedom had long since dimmed and faded, and with it had gone the innocence which had originally propelled me on

my search. Unknowingly I had reached the cynical conclusion that “this” was it. When I looked around at my closest friends, most of them veteran seekers like myself, some of them spiritual teachers, I saw nothing to challenge this assumption. We had now become a group built on good intentions and our past, a past comprised of years of spiritual practice. Over time we had grown accustomed to each other’s shortcomings and rarely challenged each other to rise to a higher standard, all of us secretly aware of our own failings. Despite the undercurrents of mistrust and conflict that continued to exist in the group and the declining state of most of our marriages, mine included, almost unbelievably we still never thought to seriously question either individually or collectively the efficacy of the spiritual community we had established. At times we would call on the services of a local therapist who unsuccessfully tried to help us deal with tensions between members of the board of what had now become an internationally respected meditation retreat center. I had taken up training in psychotherapy, my daughter was in an alternative school, I was engaged in “right livelihood” and I had a lot of friends. In fact I was a pillar in the local community. When my husband had left for India some eight months earlier to take the risk and follow his heart once again, I like many of our friends had been privately skeptical. I had wondered if, after so many years of having given so much of his life solely to spiritual practice and having met so many of the great spiritual teachers already, anything new could actually happen. With the arrival of Andrew on the scene, the very ground on which all these assumptions were built, including my own identity, became dangerously shaky.

From the very beginning, Andrew’s frank, uncompromising realness and the absolute nature of his teaching posed a serious threat to many of us. His insistence on the black-and-whiteness of truth and the personal implications of this stood like a glaring beacon in a foggy world of all-encompassing grayness, a world where good intentions were enough and where no one was held accountable for their actions. My first few months with him proved to be difficult. I experienced an ever-widening gap between myself and those of my friends who had been profoundly affected by him, including my husband. Because of my investment in my identity, pride and fear kept me locked in denial of the reality of my own life. Despite this ambivalence however, I could not deny that something extraordinary was taking place, and like a moth to a flame I attended almost every teaching. Slowly the situation created a deep, insistent internal pressure. It was in Amsterdam some three months later that the lid of my resistance and self-deception finally blew off. In an

explosive realization I saw the utter falsity of an imagined, separate self-existence, the illusion of which I had been so desperately clinging to. I saw with crystal clarity the charade my life had become. For the first time I was witnessing my own death, something that even in the most sublime experiences of nonduality I had never truly embraced. Tears poured down my cheeks. Fear and pride vanished, replaced by an immense sense of relief, of freedom and extraordinary oneness. The agonizing gap between two worlds which I had been trying to straddle miraculously closed. I felt enormous gratitude. I knew I had come home.

Immersed in this revelation I turned to my husband who was sitting beside me and was astounded to see, of all things, fear in his eyes. I couldn’t believe that after having been so eager to share the source of his newly awakened inspiration with us upon his return from India, he would now retreat in fear the moment I finally let go. What happened that evening caused me to reevaluate everything. Nothing was the same.

RETURNING TO ENGLAND, I wanted very much to share with my friends that the marvelous possibility which we had all tasted so many years ago was entirely within reach. However, I was completely unprepared for the lack of interest, mistrust and estrangement that I encountered. Rumors flew around the town. Old friends would cross the street to avoid contact and telephone conversations became short and brittle; suddenly there was “no time for coffee.” Most of my old friends withdrew behind a wall of disapproving silence. There was no interest, even on a human level it seemed, in opening up or inquiring into the unthinkable possibility that something truly extraordinary was taking place. I was struck by what I now saw as profound cynicism. “Keep back one percent, always one percent,” my former teacher warned me emphatically. I knew he was wrong. Within that one percent lay the difference between heaven and hell, liberation and bondage. That one percent would always contain the seeds of doubt, fear and separation. “That one percent is, and always will be, the problem,” I replied excitedly. Seeing my newfound conviction, the color in his face drained. His voice shaking slightly, advice turned to anger. “Your reputation in this town will be in shreds!” he shouted.

Like so many of my old friends he seemed to be terrified. Unknowingly, I was betraying the status quo that we had created and of which I had been such an integral part. It seemed that an unbridgeable gap had

developed between us. I now knew my life as I had known it was over.

On the other hand, I found myself in the midst of what seemed to me an unprecedented explosion of joy and ecstatic revelation. Word spread like wildfire of the dramatic changes that were taking place in many peoples' lives. Within weeks people were spilling out of our living room and we had to rent a larger space for Andrew to teach in. There was no doubt he had ignited a fire in our souls which was consuming our lives. Walls of separation crumbled. We spent endless hours, day and night, engaged in inspired investigation. Whether at the teachings or at a coffee shop in town, we were constantly immersed in this unfolding revelation. It was as if an insatiable force had been released in us which found its expression when two or three or more of us came together. I discovered an

nation was unknown; we were all aware of this. It was terrifying, exhilarating and utterly choiceless. The priorities of our separate lives had undergone a radical shift. In the face of discovering a mystery far beyond ourselves, all prior interests had suddenly paled in significance. The conscious choice to give ourselves to our desire to be free created a powerful bond between us. As a natural step we began living together. Many of us barely knew each other but there was an unusual delight and excitement in sharing this precious jewel we had all discovered. A rare intimacy, shocking in its depth, existed between us based on our mutual recognition and experience of nonseparation.

There was an extraordinary power in being together because everyone wanted the same thing. Coming together for this and this alone, we transcended the bound-

aries of self. In our passionate desire to be free, we began to relinquish the need to protect or maintain any personal identity or self-image. This meant that very often we were able to be completely real, undefended and vulnerable with each other, something I had never encountered before. Much of the time the atmosphere was remarkably free of the unspoken games people usually play. We were no longer interested in keeping up any pretense with each other. Instead we were more interested in

finding out what was true. I felt I had entered another world, a world devoid of deception and inauthenticity. Often it felt like paradise!

As we evolved into a stable community, a deepening trust developed between us which allowed for an uninhibited investigation of our own condition and the nature of spiritual freedom. Firmly held ideas about myself began to dissolve. No longer hiding, I felt as if I was stepping out of the shadows, able to face life fully and openly as never before. Slowly love began to take the place of fear.

continued on page 15



London, England, 1994

intimacy I had never experienced before, both with friends I had known for years and people who were almost strangers. It was magical.

IN THE SPRING OF 1988 I left my past behind and with my husband and child joined Andrew in America. Along with many others who had awakened from a deep sleep, I threw myself into the hurtling current of profound exploration that was taking place around him. The desti-

The Disco

B I G G E

The following is a chapter from
Andrew Cohen's forthcoming book.

MY OWN SEARCH FOR LIBERATION was, as it is for most people, focused on myself. The larger implications of awakening were, for the most part, not in the foreground of my consciousness. I wanted to attain final liberation from fear and insecurity, and more than that, I wanted to become convinced beyond any trace of doubt, as I had been once before, that my existence was in no way separate from all of life. When miraculously in a few short weeks with my teacher this indeed did occur, I was shocked. This shock increased by leaps and bounds in the ensuing weeks when, to my amazement, this same event—the miracle of Self-discovery—began to occur in those around me. But soon, shock grew into fascination when I began to observe something even more miraculous than the moment of Self-discovery, which was the dissolution of boundaries between those in whom the Self had been discovered. The ecstasy of absolute intimacy and perfect trust revealed a freedom of being that gradually became more significant than the liberation of any individual.

In the first few years of my teaching career my emphasis was still on the liberation of the individual alone, but I couldn't help but continue to be aware of the fact that something far more important was occurring. Those who gathered around me seemed to be simultaneously sharing a view, the perspective of which eventu-

ally proved itself to be far more important than the experience of any individual. That view was and still is that there is no other.

The ecstasy of communion first became ap-

parent to me when I was living for two months with seven other people in Rishikesh in northern India. As we spent our days and nights together immersed in the bliss of Self-discovery, the mystery of the timeless that was being shared was like an energy field that seemed to surround us. Being together was being alone, and in that aloneness there was nowhere else to go. It seemed that through being together the illusion of individuality became even more apparent. The boundaries between inner and outer literally had dissolved—it was often difficult to know where one ended and the other began.



every of a

VIEW



by Andrew Cohen

Shortly thereafter, I was invited to teach in England and within a few weeks people started gathering together to hear the teaching. Even though I was still, in the way I

had been taught, emphasizing liberation of the individual alone, the people who were gathering around me seemed to be experiencing liberation not only through spending time with me, but through simply being together.

A few months later I moved to Holland. It was then that I knew beyond any doubt that the significance of what was being shared by those individuals who had come to me far transcended the motives that I or any of them originally had. The original motive that I had as a teacher was to liberate the individual. The motive that many of those who came to me

originally had was to find freedom for themselves. Now we all found ourselves in the midst of something else altogether. We were swimming in an ocean of being where it became clear that what was revealing itself spontaneously through the collective consciousness was the evolutionary potential of the race.

Accepting the Larger Implications

After two years in Europe I moved to Massachusetts. Many people chose to follow me there and I soon found myself in an interesting predicament. I realized that I now had to come to terms with the fact that what was occurring around me was in substance far different than what I had been taught and what I originally thought that I was teaching. Enlightenment that transcended liberation for the individual alone was manifesting itself clearly in front of my eyes, and that fact now needed to be addressed by myself and those around me.

What were the implications of this event that was unfolding, that was taking a direction other than even I had originally been aware of? They seemed to be many and far reaching, and above all of the utmost significance to each and every individual involved.

We found ourselves coming together in such a way

where the experience of the individual appeared to be less important than the collective context in which that experience occurred. That context was one of perfect and unbroken unity in the realization of one Self. It appeared that precisely because of that context the impulse to evolve could express itself in a rare and remarkable way. The collective consciousness itself seemed to demand that all the individuals involved rise up to a higher level of being. What was extraordinary to behold was the birth of a spiritual conscience in the group as a whole that was able to see and feel with greater depth than many of the individuals on their own. Indeed, being together in this way, the intrusive presence of ego became glaringly obvious not just to some individuals, but to the collective consciousness of the group as a whole. Any need to remain separate that stemmed from the fear of the implications of that unity became apparent in a stark yet potentially liberating way. It became easier for those individuals who sincerely wanted to be free to become undeniably aware of exactly what it was that had always been obscuring that freedom. And even more importantly, the birth of that context revealed the way to perfect transcendence literally and unambiguously, not only for one, but for all to see. True liberation became no longer a distant possibility, but a living potential for any individual who had the courage to let go. And even more significant was the fact

that the simultaneous recognition of unity by so many revealed a thrilling evolutionary potential. It seemed to call each and every one of those who were aware of it to leave behind any and all obstructions to that unity, so that the fact of oneness could become manifest in this world, not only as inner knowing by one, but as objective fact by many. Indeed, it seemed that heaven could become manifest on earth if only a few were willing.

The bond of love and mystical communion that had drawn us together was making apparent the fact that conformity by the individuals involved to the demand of a higher principle was essential. Too often the experience of mystical union remains only a revelation of the extraordinary evolutionary potential inherent in the human condition. When the shadow normally cast by the ego temporarily dissolves, the light of the living Truth unobscured reveals not only the glorious and inherent perfection of life, but even more importantly the *way* that perfection can become manifest in a seemingly imperfect world. When the way is revealed, all things become possible. But that possibility is rarely actualized, and when it is, it usually remains limited to one individual alone. Unless the spiritual vision is able to manifest itself beyond the individual, the profound evolutionary potential inherent in that vision cannot truly unfold. ■

NOWHERE TO HIDE

Many see spiritual communities as places where people who have trouble making it in the world can hide out and escape from having to take responsibility for their own lives. While in many cases this may indeed be so, a true spiritual community should be a place that is a lot more challenging and more demanding to live in than the ordinary world. It should be a place where people who aren't serious about their own evolution wouldn't be able to survive. It should be far more challenging than living in a world where fundamentally the law is compromise. A true spiritual community is a proving ground, a constant testing ground. It should be a place where the absolute truth is a living revelation in light of which one would never be able to avoid the actuality of one's own condition. And more than that, one would never be able to escape from what is possible...if that possibility was not already being lived.

Andrew Cohen

The Long and Winding Road

continued from page 11

As time went by however, we all began to understand that true love has a price. In living so closely with others, the lack of trust that had characterized my marriage for so many years began to stand out in stark contrast to the profound intimacy we were all sharing. Although I found it personally challenging, because of my passionate desire to be free I knew I had to let go of my marriage and face the insecurity and aloneness it had shielded me from. Difficult as this was at the time, it led to the discovery of a new depth of confidence and trust in life itself. I came to realize that real spiritual life begins with a profound reckoning. Do I really want to be free or not? Once this choice has been made one's relationship to life changes radically. One begins to recognize the profound significance of each and every action and in that recognition one feels compelled to take absolute responsibility for one's life.

LOOKING BACK I UNDERSTAND what made the time I spent with my old friends in Dalhousie almost twenty years ago so special; why it left such an indelible impression and a bond between some of us that still exists today. During that time we had also come together out of a mutual recognition and desire for something beyond ourselves. Temporarily transcending petty self-centered concerns, we tasted intimations of true intimacy. It has become equally clear over time why the community in Kent ultimately failed. With the loss of that transcendent goal and perspective, we all inevitably reverted to the mechanical condition of selfhood where separation, lack of trust and self-protection rule.

A true community acts as a vehicle, a catalyst for profound evolution, but in order for it to serve this purpose, each individual must be willing to be "a light unto themselves," possessing an independent interest, love and commitment to the truth. How rare in history is the phenomenon of genuine spiritual community and

how important is its function! For if all its members are truly committed to the discovery and manifestation of Truth, there will be no limits to its evolutionary potential.

I now understand why the Buddha included Sangha (spiritual community) in the Triple Gem, citing, "keeping the company of like-minded people" as being of equal importance to the teacher (Buddha) and the teachings (Dharma). The yearning in each of us for intimacy and true love, and the commitment, strength and sustained transcendent perspective needed to bring this to fruition is extremely rare and delicate.

EIGHT YEARS LATER the explosion that first began in that small Devonshire cot-

tage has mushroomed into a community of people dedicated to fulfilling that yearning. This community now spans three continents.

My life has come full circle. I am back living in England, helping to run a center in London that has evolved to support the momentum of passionate interest in the truth that has developed here over the last few years. On entering the tranquil, cobbled courtyard tucked behind the noisy streets of London, I make my way to the meditation hall. There seated inside is a large group of silent figures immersed in the gathering stillness of the evening. As I gaze momentarily at the clear, dignified faces around me, I feel a surge of love and extraordinary oneness with these people who are part of the community that has formed here in response to Andrew's teachings. I know that we have entered an unfolding mystery, the nature of which is endlessly fascinating and always unknown. The yearning which propelled me on my search almost twenty years ago has found utter fulfillment in the rare and powerful phenomenon of true spiritual community. Closing my eyes, I am aware of the profound peace and happiness of knowing without a doubt that I have truly come home. ■

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SPIRITUAL

Beyond

Excerpts from

For more than three decades, Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California has been a symbol of questioning limited paradigms, of breaking through boundaries, of possibility, of change. In the 1960s a pioneer in the human potential movement, now an established center for experimental education, Esalen has drawn together teachers, leaders, artists, authors, therapists and scientists from all over the world to explore the possibilities of human transformation. This winter, Sharon Tahn, current director of Esalen, invited Andrew Cohen to speak to the Esalen staff about the meaning of spiritual community. The following is an excerpt from that evening.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM OF HUMANITY is a crisis of trust. Very few people deeply trust the person that they share a bed with at night, and very few people have friends that they truly and very deeply trust. In fact, very few people trust anybody at all. This is one way to understand how and why the human predicament of conflict, strife and aggression has existed for so long, and how and why it continues.

This crisis of trust is not something that only exists in the secular world. It is also prevalent within religious or spiritual communities. Many people who pursue personal transformation and spiritual experience and insight try to avoid the fact that they don't exist in isolation. They try to avoid the fact that they exist in a larger context. That larger context is the human race as a whole, and obviously the whole world, and ultimately the universe that we find ourselves in. Most people are more concerned with how they feel, what they think and what they want than they are in this larger context. This self-concern creates the sense of separation

and isolation that is the very essence of what is so wrong with the world.

When a human being begins to take seriously the spiritual quest, they have to begin to give attention to the whole context in which this longing for liberation was experienced in the first place. When an individual human being experiences deep in their own heart a longing for spiritual liberation or a longing for the experience of unity and connectedness, there is nothing personal about it. It is an impersonal event. It means that the evolutionary impulse of the human race has become active and an individual has become consciously aware of it within themselves—but there is nothing personal about it.

People overpersonalize the experience of spiritual feelings and the experience of spiritual insight, instead of realizing that spiritual experiences and spiritual insight are simply there to liberate us from the illusion of independent self-existence. Spiritual experience and insight are there to

COMMUNITY

d Personal Liberation

a Talk Given by Andrew Cohen at Esalen Institute

reveal the Truth to us and to give us the courage to be able to come together. It's not really about much more than that. It's not only about any one individual's liberation from fear and ignorance, but it's about revealing a way to live together and be together that makes absolute and perfect sense.

You mentioned the importance of trust. Why does it seem so very difficult, why such an uphill battle?

A: Most of us don't have much reason to trust. Most have experienced trauma and rejection of all kinds, and have been convinced emotionally and psychologically that trusting is not a very wise thing to do. Because if you allow yourself to trust and become vulnerable, someone will simply try to hurt you. But even so, there is no justification not to trust. As long as the individual is fundamentally concerned with how hurt they have been and what's been done to them, it will be almost impossible to have any truly profound and significant spiritual breakthrough. If we want to realize a very different perspective, we have to become more interested in that new perspective than we are in what has already happened. The individual has to realize sooner or later that "If I'm unwilling to trust, if I'm unwilling to be vulnerable, then there's no way that this kind of breakthrough, this kind of transformation, is going to occur. I have to be the one who's willing to do it."

If one is serious in one's intention to be free, one has to be willing to be the most trustworthy person that one knows, no matter what. When one individual is willing to do that

and be that and set the example, that individual becomes very powerful, in a very constructive way. Because if it's sincere, if it's genuine, if the individual is really risking and putting themselves on the line and means it, other people will know it. They will feel it. In the company or presence of that individual they will realize: "This person means business. This person's not playing games." And there will be a chain reaction, only because that one individual has decided to take a stand that's absolute. This begins to have an effect on other people. Some people will run. Other people will condemn and find all kinds of crazy reasons to do so. But others, in the light of that individual's reflection, will feel the horror of the consequences of their own willingness to endlessly compromise and never take life absolutely seriously.

In terms of community, what are the structures that can support the development and the sustaining of trust?

A: Very simply, the structures that contain and sustain trust, and are ultimately the expression of evolution itself, are those individuals who are willing to be the most trustworthy people that they know. Now, if you have one person who is willing to be the most trustworthy person that they know, it is very powerful. What if there are two people who come together who have that same willingness? And if there are three or four, then that is what begins to create the kind of structure we're speaking about that's very powerful and that's ultimately transformative.

What is the groundwork or foundation that makes it possible for a person to realize this degree of trust?

A: The foundation has to do with the intention of the individual. The individual has to come to that point in their life where they have made the decision, "I want to be free more than anything else." At that point there is a shift in priorities. Freedom is a metaphor for no boundaries. It's a metaphor for no limitation. It's a metaphor for fullness. There are very few individuals who come to the decision, "I want to be free more than anything else. I'd be willing to make any sacrifice of any price. There's nothing that's more important to me," and are willing to put their money where their mouth is. They are willing to put their life on the line. They really mean it. This is not a game to them. This is not a weekend workshop, a matter one contemplates for a short time, but this is one's whole life.

Ultimately it has to become that real and that serious if it's really going to work. Because what often happens is that when people begin to contemplate these matters there is a revelation. A possibility reveals itself and the person says, "Oh my God!" But very few people respond to this revelation. For many people, this experience of revelation and discovery of an extraordinary possibility becomes an end in itself. So many people say, "I realize that I've never been separate, we're all one, this is beautiful!" then feel exhilarated for a few days or weeks.

But the point is, unless we are willing to respond to the experience of revelation in the way we are living our lives practically, the experience ends up not meaning very much and just becomes an object, another memory. Most people relate to the experience of revelation as an end in itself, but it's not. Things really change only when an individual is ready and willing to respond to their own direct experience of revelation. When they are ready to respond to it, transformation begins to occur and that is when all boundaries fall away and the chains of time and memory are broken. That is when an individual becomes reborn, literally.

How do you deal with conflict when it arises?

A: The way I deal with conflict has to do with how and why individuals are coming together. If an individual truly wants to be free more than anything else, then the Truth has to become more important to them than their own personal thoughts or feelings. To me the Truth is not an object. It is not a thought, memory or feeling of any kind. The Truth is a perspective that is undistorted and uncorrupted by fear and desire. The Truth is a perspective that reveals the way things are, rather than how we want them to be or are afraid they may be.

The reason why people don't get along is because for most, their own thoughts and feelings are more important than the Truth itself. If a group of people come together, and all the individuals in that group want to be free more than anything else, want to know the Truth more than anything else, then anything that occurs between them will always be seen in light of that. That is when the way to come together is discovered.

When a group of people are able to cultivate this kind of passion and clarity of intention, then something very sacred becomes possible: a window suddenly appears that was unseen before. The window is a clear reflection of actuality. Suddenly the individual is able to see what's true beyond their own personal feelings, beyond their preconceived ideas of shoulds and shouldn'ts. A window appears in which the individual suddenly

"Spiritual experience and insight are there to reveal the Truth to us and to give us the courage to be able to come together. It's not really about much more than that. It's not only about any one individual's liberation from fear and ignorance, but it's about revealing a way to live together and be together that makes absolute and perfect sense."

is able to see the way things actually are, beyond how they may feel or what they may think. And if two people are able to see that window at the same time, then whatever differences there may seem to be become secondary, and what's seen through that window becomes primary, which is what's true. And that's how it becomes possible to come together in an extraordinary way. ■

Ecstatic Intimacy

by Andrew Cohen

When individuals who are temporarily undistracted by memory, fear of the future and infatuation with the personal come together, an extraordinary and ecstatic intimacy occurs. Ecstatic because one experiences oneself beyond limitation. One soars beyond the usually perceived limitations of what is possible in the perception of another to such a degree that it is possible literally to merge in consciousness and experience one mind. Experiences such as these reveal that which usually remains hidden behind the mask of individuality: the unbearably delicate and deeply sacred nature of relationship.

Indeed, when one dares to experience no restriction whatsoever, it becomes possible to discover one perceiver, one "I," that is utterly impersonal and absolutely personal at the same time. It is when that one "I" is discovered and recognized by many people simultaneously that a different order of relationship based on that discovery can begin to manifest. That new order of relationship is based on the individual/collective shift in orientation from identification with the personal as true Self to the identification with the impersonal absolute as true Self. This shift in perspective can completely change the way those individuals relate, not only to themselves but far more importantly, to each other. The fundamental belief in the individual as being separate is recognized as no longer valid and the uniqueness of the individual no longer carries the same significance it once had.

Now what is of overwhelming significance is something else: the inherent nondifference between Self and other.

Dying into that significance is Liberation.

Sometimes one happens upon an image whose elegance, truth and beauty can haunt one for years, knocking against the mind's doors, demanding that its significance be allowed to enter and unfold and transform one's vision of the world itself. The jewel net of Indra is such an image, one that became central to a major school of Chinese Buddhism, the Hua-yen. In its vivid portrayal of the interdependence of all things, it provides a metaphor for the vision which must be the basis for genuine spiritual community, and for a new way for humanity to live together free from the illusion of isolation. The following article, adapted from Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra by Francis H. Cook, explains and develops this striking metaphor and explores its ethical implications.

The Jewel Net of Indra

by Francis H. Cook

WE MAY BEGIN WITH AN IMAGE which has always been the favorite Hua-yen method of exemplifying the manner in which things exist. Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net which has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out infinitely in all directions. In accordance with the extravagant tastes of deities, the artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each eye of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number. There hang the jewels, glittering like stars of the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring. The Hua-yen school has been fond of this image, mentioned many times in its literature, because it symbolizes a cosmos in which there is an infinitely repeated interrelationship among all the members of the cosmos. This relationship is said to be one of simultaneous mutual identity and mutual inter-causality. Each individual is at once the cause for the whole and is caused by the whole, and what is called existence is a vast body made up of an infinity of individuals all sustaining each other and defining each other.

The cosmos is, in short, a self-creating, self-maintaining, and self-defining organism. It is a living body in which each cell derives its life from all the other cells, and in return gives life to those many others. Like the human body, the Hua-yen universe is ever changing, for in it there is not one thing which is static and unchanging, unless it is the law of perpetual change itself. It is an incredible stream of activity wherein when one circumstance alters, everything alters with it. "Do I dare to eat a peach?" asks one of T. S. Eliot's characters, and the question of action becomes an extremely delicate one to the individual who sees the fantastic interaction of things. Thus in a universe which is pure fluidity, or process, no act can but have an effect on the whole, just as a pebble tossed into a pool sends waves out to the farthest shore and stirs the very bottom. This is hard to see. We can comprehend how a modification in one small part of our body can affect the total organism, but we find it hard to believe that the enlightenment of one monk under a tree in India somehow enlightens us all, or conversely, that my own intransigent ignorance is a universal ignorance. However, if we can comprehend that the greater whole of which the body is a part is no less organic, and no less interrelated, such an idea is not so unlikely. At that point, the moral life as conceived by Buddhism becomes possible.

If the Hua-yen vision of being contains any validity at all, then what touches one part of that body must touch the

whole body. Because the whole web is shaken when one strand is touched, the whole of existence is somehow affected by the progress of the Bodhisattva. For the same reason, in a way which may elude those of us who are too engrossed in mundane matters of getting and spending, the ignorance, hatred, and desire which poison any one man's life must also poison the whole of existence. This being the case, any light which illuminates and transforms the existence of one person also helps to illuminate and transform the life of an Eskimo in northern Alaska, and by the same token, my own ignorance is also the ignorance of the nomad in the Kalahari Desert. Am I not the poorer because one man decided that six million Jews should be murdered? Likewise, because Bodhidharma sat in meditation, facing a cave wall for nine years, am I not the better? Who truly knows the outer limits of the radiating karma of any one man? Perhaps to pluck a flower is indeed to make a star in Orion tremble to its molten core.

The reality of identity and interdependence acts as a moral imperative, leaving the truly moral being with no option but to act in accordance with this reality. For if my own existence is unthinkable apart from the existence of this infinite other, and if my own actions touch these beings in some manner, then I must have an obligation to act in such a way that all benefit from the acts. I may, of course, choose otherwise, but then I am not acting in a fundamentally ethical manner, nor, of course, am I making any progress in my own development. But insight teaches me that my choices do indeed touch others, and in a manner unsuspected by Sartre, I choose for all when I choose for myself. If I choose the way of common men, I choose that all partake of some share of darkness and rage; if, on the contrary, I choose the way of light, I choose that all be bathed in light. If, as Hua-yen claims, all things are bound inextricably together in community, then what I will, will be the lot of all.

The interrelationships described by Hua-yen are not simply those among human beings, or even simply among living things. Whether the individual is a human being, a birch tree, or a stone, that individual exists only in dependence on all other things. But the human being is faced with a problem not shared by a stone; he must adopt an ethical stance toward all things, which is consonant with this interdependence. Compassion, which I am considering to be an ethical matter here, is inextricably bound up with perception. It is really only the dynamic form of prajna-insight, which is itself the insight into emptiness. To be compassionate really means to treat the other in conformity with what that object is in reality, divorced from illusion,

wishfulness, inference, hearsay, convention, and the like. Simply stated, to act compassionately means to act in accordance with reality. As long as I always react to experience in terms of what is beneficial or harmful to my self, I can never really be of any effective use to others. When I am empty of a self, and when I no longer act in terms of selves, or within any conceptual framework, my relationship with the other will be that which the bystander would call "compassionate." Such a compassion is obviously not of the common variety, which is flawed with sentimentality, strained through erroneous concepts, and probably infected with some degree of ego need. We may, perhaps, think of it as "metaphysical compassion," to use Ananda Coomaraswamy's term. We might even go so far as to call it love, but certainly no love that we know. Not the love of the mother for her child, not the love of Tristan for Isolde; it is not like the love of the patriot for his country, or even like the love the worshiper feels for his god. Our experience of love is limited and self-interested. If anything, Buddhist love is something akin to that love of which Dante spoke so movingly and

beautifully, as "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars." At first glance this may

seem to be an outrageous exaggeration, but this compassion is not the compassion of the common man; it is the occurrence in space and time of a compassion which pervades ten thousand galaxies and realizes itself in them, individual by individual.

Someone once made the observation that one's skin is not necessarily a boundary marking off the self from the not-self but rather that which brings one into contact with the other. Like Faraday's electric charge which must be conceived as being every-

where, I am in some sense boundless, my being encompassing the farthest limits of the

universe, touching and moving every atom in existence. The same is true of everything else. The interfusion, the sharing of destiny, is as infinite in scope as the reflections in the jewels of Indra's net. When in a rare moment I manage painfully to rise above a petty individualism by knowing my true nature, I perceive that I dwell in the wondrous net of Indra, and in this incredible network of interdependence, the career of the Bodhisattva must begin. It is not just that "we are all in it" together. We all *are* it, rising or falling as one living body. ■

Francis H. Cook received his Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from the University of Wisconsin and taught religion at the University of California, Riverdale. Retired now, he has authored four books on Buddhism and has been a student of Zen Buddhism for over thirty years.

*Each individual is at once
the cause for the whole
and is caused by the whole,
and what is called existence
is a vast body made up
of an infinity of individuals
all sustaining each other
and defining each other.*

P A R A L L E

A spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future. By this is not meant what is ordinarily called a universal religion, a system, a thing of creed and intellectual belief and dogma and outward rite....A religion of humanity means the growing realization that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one, that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth, that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here. It implies a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about a kingdom of this divine Spirit upon earth. By its growth within us oneness with our fellow-men will become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of cooperation but a deeper brotherhood, a real and an inner sense of unity and equality and a common life. There must be the realization by the individual that only in the life of his fellow-men is his own life complete. There must be the realization by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded.

Sri Aurobindo
The Ideal of Human Unity

The most important factor in giving shape to our human existence is the setting up and establishment of a goal: the goal being a community of free and happy human beings who by constant inward endeavor strive to liberate themselves from the inheritance of anti-social and destructive instincts.

Albert Einstein
The Goal of Human Existence

"The way we are," he says, "we are members of each other. All of us. Everything. The difference ain't in who is a member and who is not, but in who knows it and who don't."

Wendell Berry
The Wild Birds

Ananda: "Half of this holy life, Lord, is friendship with spiritual company, companionship with spiritual company, association with spiritual company."

Gautama Buddha: "Do not say that Ananda. It is the whole of this holy life, this friendship, companionship and association with spiritual company."

Pali Canon, Samyutta Nikaya

If we realized that community is the essential manifestation of the Great Process of Divine Evolution, and that selflessness establishes the height of ecstasy—that you are happiest, genuinely happiest when you have the least concern for your own personal isolation—why would anyone not work toward making that a viable possibility?

Lee Lozowick
Living God Blues

So what is important is to understand oneself in relationship with another. Then relationship becomes not a process of isolation, but a movement in which you discover your own motives, your own thoughts, your own pursuits; and that very discovery is the beginning of liberation, the beginning of transformation. It is only this immediate transformation that can bring about the fundamental, radical revolution in the world that is so essential. Revolution within the walls of isolation is not a revolution. Revolution comes only when the walls of isolation are destroyed.

J. Krishnamurti
On Relationship

Do You Believe in Fairies?



A Visit to the Findhorn Community

by Barbara Waldorf

Findhorn is a name that conjures up unusual images, giant cabbages and fairies behind every tree. I first heard of it twenty years ago when I was at a small alternative college in America's Pacific Northwest. There was something beginning called the New Age, and Findhorn was one of the places where it was happening. We heard stories of extraordinary gardens filled with plant spirits and devas. A different kind of community was being developed, where people could live together in harmony, united by a bigger vision. I always wanted to go there, but northern Scotland was just too far away. The closest I ever got to living in a New Age community was on an island in Puget Sound that was supposed to have Native American ghosts and an active volcano. That didn't work out, but the idea of real community fascinated me and never quite let go.

I live in London now. Over the years Findhorn has

crossed my path in different ways, a stray pamphlet in the acupuncturist's office or a story from friends. The legend has endured, so when the opportunity came to go I jumped at the chance to visit this place I had been intrigued by for so long.

I get out at Inverness to wait for the local train. I'm in the far north of Scotland, almost to the top of the map where it goes off into the Arctic. The rain continues, of course, and I can barely understand the man in the pub when I ask for directions. This has become a familiar experience; it is only an illusion that Americans speak the same language as the British. The taxi driver in Forres shows me the local standing stone, an ancient monument with indecipherable inscriptions. I have definitely left London far behind.

As we drive up the main street of what they call The Park, I see the original trailers that are the Findhorn trademark. Tucked all around them are prototype environmental

houses, a magnificent "Universal Hall" and the ever famous gardens. It is all done beautifully, with an attention to detail that is remarkable. When I see pictures of the scrub and garbage that existed thirty years ago, back when Eileen and Peter Caddy and their friend Dorothy Maclean first moved to the Findhorn Bay Caravan Park, I begin to appreciate just how much energy has gone into the environment here. What started in a little garden behind their trailer has grown into a large, internationally known spiritual community. Eileen's conversations with God, whose voice she heard while meditating, gave her guidance and direction to found the community. Peter was the active force, carrying out the messages that Eileen received. For years this was how every detail of the community was run. Eventually Eileen stopped giving messages to the community and Peter moved away, but they definitely gave Findhorn the direction that it has today.

I go into the Universal Hall visitors' center to sign in. There is a huge stained glass window of a psychedelic bird in flight and some intricately carved wooden pillars circa 1972 which contrast with the institutional carpet and the emptiness of the place. No one is there so I wait, looking at a photo display of the history of Findhorn and reading the course catalogues scattered throughout the room. I find this quote: "Learning to live in Harmony with the Universal Mind, aligning with the higher and deeper Self, working with various inspiring teachers and guides, co-operating with angelic and elemental forces—this is the essence of the Findhorn Foundation experience."

Eventually Caroline appears. She is very friendly as she explains the official workings of Findhorn to me. I am a "short-term guest," which gives me the opportunity to work in a department, meditate in the sanctuaries and eat lunch and dinner with everyone. It also gives me access to The Park. The other areas of the Foundation can only be visited with a sponsor. I am given a map, a brochure and meal tickets. I look at the tickets, there are little angels printed on them. "Well," I think, "this is it. I'm really at Findhorn now."

As I walk around I feel myself surreptitiously looking for angels and fairies out of the corner of my eye. They are so much part of the Findhorn mythology. I see them in the "angel of the day" card at the cash register in the café, on the bulletin board with the daily work detail and the wallpaper in the ladies' toilet. There are a number of courses in the Foundation catalogue that will teach you to tune in to the energy of the angels and have a "practical cooperative

working relationship" with them. The whole subject of fairies seems to fly in and out of almost every conversation I have, even the most practical. I never know quite what to think or say when the talk turns to the significance of the contribution that angels and devas make in the community. Usually I just try to steer us back to human beings.

That evening I go to the main dining hall for dinner. The large wooden room is filled with people eating, talking and looking at the notices on the bulletin boards that line the room. The meal is solidly organic: brown rice, tofu and what appear to be normal size vegetables. I have been asked to help with the dishes, so as I finish my dinner the "focaliser" of the cleanup comes to get me. I put on an apron and go into the kitchen ready to get to work. Six people are standing there in a circle. We are told to hold hands and listen for the energy. This is a Findhorn custom done before any job or activity. We are attuning ourselves to what the universe wants us to do, to the true meaning of the work. Everyone is standing with their eyes closed, but I have an overwhelming urge to peek. Maybe there will be kitchen fairies on the top of the stove, but no, there is only a mountain of dirty pots and pans. Cleaning up after 150 people is not a small task.

Weaving my way on stone paths through gardens and meditation circles, I find the trailer where I will stay for the first night. Surprisingly, it seems quite ordinary. I am not sure what I expected. Over tea the next morning I talk to a German woman who has been staying here for the past few weeks.



As I walk around I feel myself surreptitiously looking for angels and fairies out of the corner of my eye. They are so much part of the Findhorn mythology.

She says that the customs at Findhorn are very familiar and comfortable for her, lighting candles and attuning before work. They strongly remind her of Catholic Church rituals she has done all her life. It dawns on me that for some people the rituals involved in the New Age have the same function as in church. They make one feel watched over and protected. I keep on looking and talking, trying to find what makes this community tick.

I take a walk one afternoon through the different parts of Findhorn. It is surprisingly spread out and varies between open fields, pine forests and densely populated areas. Physically, the land is beautiful, the bay and the dunes. I come upon a circular stone building built by hand straight into the hillside. It is a meditation sanctuary tucked away in the woods. This one looks like they reconstructed a floor plan from J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. A hobbit could walk out at any minute. The path takes me out to the beach. I pass a huge spiral of stones someone has carefully placed on a dune. At night the stars

fill the sky and the silence is deafening. It echoes in my ears and reminds me just how far away I really am.

Various people's names have been given to me by friends in London. I visit some of them. Lynn lives in a house in the nearby village with her family. She greets me at the door accompanied by a large friendly dog and takes me to the kitchen, where her two daughters are making chocolate Easter eggs. She has lived here for many years and has a very responsible job with the Foundation. We sit for hours drinking tea and talking about what it means to live in a community. I am very surprised to hear her say that there is no community here. She says that they have outgrown their paradigm of a family, where they knew everyone's name around the dinner table, and really don't know where to go next. They have been in this situation for three years now. This helps to explain why everyone I talk to has a different story about what this community really is.


Recently, to help them get some guidance they all played what's called the "Transformation Game." This board game was developed by some members to "re-create in miniature the soul's journey through life." With the help of "Guardian Angels" and "Universal Feedback," one attempts to move up through the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual planes. Along the way you use "awareness tokens" and "intuitive flash coins." When you have emptied your "unconscious envelope" and are free from pain, then you are transformed and you win. When the community played all together they did it in their work groups, and it was the businessmen who sailed through and helped everyone else to finish. This fascinated me since the businessmen were some of the most open people that I met at Findhorn.

I spend some time in the local book/health food/craft store, the Phoenix Center, a condensed journey through the New Age itself. On Sunday afternoon it is packed with tourists. You can barely move between the people browsing the aisles. There are more crystals, unicorn calendars and rainbow stickers than I ever thought existed. I buy a book and some cards. On my receipt it says, "Celebrating business as sacred." There are many other businesses at Findhorn: a publishing company, a pizza parlor and a café that could be in a trendy area of any big city. Findhorn sells energy, literally; the alternative energy company produces more than the community uses, so the local village buys the extra kilowatts. I am startled to see an internal community flyer which says,

"Running a business was agreed to be the ultimate personal growth experience."

My eyes open after an hour. I have been meditating at my new guest house, a huge old mansion on Findhorn Bay. Now the ballroom is used for Taizé singing (a type of Christian chanting), Sufi meditation and yoga workshops. I am in a sanctuary, one of the meditation areas that are placed throughout the buildings and grounds of Findhorn. One of them has a Tibetan Tara statue in it, another a large candle. This one has a 180-degree view of the bay and a circle of shells, stones and feathers in the middle of the floor. The light is incredibly clear and delicate and I can hear the sound of the singing coming up through the floorboards as I sit. I heard stories of how in the past, Peter Caddy used to run around the grounds looking for people who were skipping meditation, but all the sanctuaries I see are empty, except on Sunday morning.

I am impressed by the sincerity of some of the people I meet who have been on the spiritual path for five, ten, twenty-five years and are still seeking. Many of them feel called to be at Findhorn. This is their home. James is building a house by recycling huge, old whisky barrels (they really are big enough to live in). He has been here for fourteen years. I go to his house one night and we have a long talk about the state of the world, the global mafia and mutual friends in San Francisco. The conversation turns as it always does to Findhorn. He says, "People come here to change. The energy of transformation is very strong." That energy gets so overwhelming, he tells me, that sometimes he just gets in his car and drives away, but he usually only gets as far as Nairn (the nearest town) before the pull of Findhorn calls him back.



To help them get some guidance
they all played what's called
the "Transformation Game."
When you have emptied your
"unconscious envelope" and
are free from pain, then you are
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Between talking to different people I sit in the café at the Universal Hall. They serve a mean cappuccino, have great French pastry and play the latest music. For moments I completely forget that I am in one of the most remote areas of the

UK. As I drink my coffee, the sound drifts over of all the conversations going on around me. There is a couple speaking Spanish at the next table. We are staying at the same guest house. Evidently there is a lot of interest in the New Age in Spain. The group next to the window is clearly

German, as are many of the visitors I meet. I run into my first and only Scotsman here. A group of men come in and I recognize one of them. He says that they are having their annual community men's meeting. Last year seventy-five men came to the meeting. Only fifteen men showed up today. They apparently had trouble agreeing on a topic and then broke up to watch a football match.

Findhorn holds the promise of a life in tune with the spirit, and people come here seeking. A highly sophisticated and very efficient structure exists for dealing with the thousands of visitors who arrive every year. Education is now the largest and most successful business of the Foundation. "We have stopped growing forty-pound cabbages and started growing people." There is a veritable

smorgasbord of courses on everything from the psychological to the psychic. Many ways are taught: finding the spirit through dance, singing, bee-keeping or breathing; relationships as a path of spiritual growth; how to discover hidden realities or create your own if you don't like what

you find. You can look for elves, find your inner teacher or go on pilgrimage to Tibet. Courses run from a two-day workshop to the two-year community apprenticeship program, and when you leave, you can join the network of light and become a "Friend of Findhorn." There is a world being created here that has its own rules and internal coherence. For many this new paradigm represents a path out of an old way of life that they have become increasingly dissatisfied with.

Eileen Caddy is very respected; she is a touchstone for the community. I was moved by her autobiography, a powerful story of a woman committed to the spiritual search. Eileen's example of following her inner voice, wherever it took her and whatever it said, provides much of the inspiration at Findhorn. Many people teach at Findhorn but there is no official teacher and from all accounts Eileen has refused to take that role. I am told that the whole idea of the Foundation's work is to encourage each person to find their own inner "specialness," that one should be supported from within rather than from someone else's special wisdom. The essential teaching here is that everyone should listen to their individual, internal voice to find their own guidance.

But those voices don't always agree.

My last glimpse of Findhorn is from the taxi, it is of houses and gardens shrouded in the early morning mist. The taxi driver is a resident. She tells me her story of visiting for years and then finally making the move. She is in her late fifties, a grandmotherly person who looks like she would be more at home in a suburban shopping mall than a New Age center. She is very jolly for the early morning and it takes me a while to realize that I have been completely overcharged for the short ten-minute ride to the station.

On my way back to London I think about the past few days as I watch the wild Scottish countryside become more tame and increasingly urban as we speed south. The New Age is vastly more popular than I had imagined. Many of the

ideas that are now embedded in our culture originated at the Findhorn Bay Caravan Park, with Eileen and Peter and their growing band of friends and followers. There is a worldwide New Age network that depends on Findhorn for its history and inspiration.

As the train pulls into King's Cross station at rush hour, noise, dirt and chaos greet me. London is as gritty as ever, a total contrast to the ethereal atmosphere I've just left. Reality hits hard as I bump into a businessman when we both run for

the same cab. By the time I get home I am exhausted. I make a cup of tea, sit on my couch and in no time fall into a deep sleep.

Suddenly I'm in a maze of trailers, lost and trying to get out. I see two fairies carrying huge strawberries. I go to them and ask how to find my way home, but they just laugh and fly away. Then an angel appears, with big gossamer wings, looking like Glinda the good witch. I ask her for directions to London. She says, "Listen to the still, small voice, find the guidance within." "I just want directions back to London," I repeat, but she disappears in a cloud. An elf jumps out from behind a tree carrying huge orchestral cymbals. As he walks towards me he begins to bang them together violently. "Clang, clang, clang." I put my fingers in my ears but the clanging just gets louder and louder. With a jolt I wake up to the sound of the telephone ringing beside my head. Dazed, I answer. "I'm glad you're back. How was your time at Findhorn?" my friend asks. "It's a long story. I have to tell you about it," I reply. "Great, what are you doing later? I'm going to a talk called 'Angels and Devas in the City' this evening. Do you want to come?" I laugh and say, "No thanks, not tonight." ■



The essential teaching here is that everyone should listen to their individual, internal voice to find their own guidance. But those voices don't always agree.

INTERNATIONAL TEACHING SCHEDULE FOR ANDREW COHEN

SWITZERLAND RETREAT

A seven-day retreat in the Swiss Alps

August 1 - 9

Berkeley, CA

*An evening with Andrew Cohen,
Robert Ennis and Mr. Lee Khepa Baul*

August 18

Corte Madera, CA

August 26 - September 9

Toronto, Canada

September 12 - 13

New York, NY

September 17 - 19

Cambridge, MA

September 21

Craryville, NY

A three-day retreat

September 23 - 25

Woodstock, NY

September 25

Corte Madera, CA

October 7 - November 26

London, England

December 7

Cologne, Germany

A one-day retreat

December 10

Amsterdam, Holland

December 12

Rome, Italy

December 16 - 18

Tel Aviv, Israel

December 22 - 25

INDIA RETREAT

A fourteen-day retreat in Bodhgaya

January 6 - 21, 1995

Kathmandu, Nepal

February 3 - 7

Bangkok, Thailand

February 11 - 12

New Zealand

February 17 - 26

NEW ZEALAND RETREAT

*Led by Ernie Mavrides,
a senior student of Andrew Cohen*

November 4 - 6, 1994

*Dates are subject to change. Please confirm all dates with
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New Releases

Special Release for this Edition!

TRUE SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

#A513

In this captivating series of dialogues, Andrew Cohen asserts that a true spiritual community must be a place where the highest possibility of human evolution is actually being lived. He explains that this very delicate process of evolution requires a demanding and supportive environment in which each individual is constantly challenged to go beyond all limitation.

Audios

The Fire of Creation

Portland, OR

April 13, 1994

#A581

In this explosive tape Andrew Cohen asserts that at the core of any true spiritual teaching is a revolutionary and transformative fire. He explains that any individual who seeks real spiritual transformation must take a leap beyond the context of their own personal life into that fire of the "undifferentiated creative force" itself.

A Life Without Pretense

Bali, Indonesia

February 14, 1994

#A558

In this inspiring audio tape Andrew Cohen reveals why an individual must have an unconditional relationship to the possibility of perfect freedom in order to discover what it truly means to live a life without compromise or pretense.

The Spiritual Quest: Becoming Fully Human

Side One: JFK University

Orinda, CA

October 26, 1993

Side Two: Interview with Hans Burgschmidt

Toronto, Canada

November 20, 1993

#A507

Andrew Cohen describes the journey to spiritual awakening as a quest to discover one's full humanity. In these talks he states that liberation is fundamentally about becoming a living expression of profound simplicity, unity and integrity.

If you would like more information about other audio and video titles by Andrew Cohen or about our audio tape subscription series, please contact Moksha Foundation to receive the most recent Audio/Video Catalog.

Videos

The Law of Love

Theosophical Society, New York City

April 24, 1994

#V587

Andrew Cohen challenges those who are deeply serious about awakening to prove it is possible to live together in true love, trust and intimacy. In this powerful talk he describes how when people come together for the sake of the truth alone, an evolutionary force emerges which destroys all illusion of individuality and separation.

The Truth Demands Everything

Bali, Indonesia

February 20, 1994

#V561

In this video Andrew Cohen passionately claims that one who cares deeply about others and about all of humanity must be willing to give themselves totally to attaining liberation in this birth. Only then can one become a heroic example of what is possible for the whole human race.

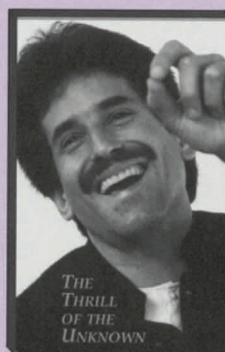
The Courage to Be Victorious

New York City, NY

April 26, 1994

#V589

Andrew Cohen speaks boldly about the tremendous courage necessary to make freedom the highest priority in one's life. In this provocative talk he points out that very few understand the degree of seriousness required to embrace the enormous implications inherent in a life of spiritual freedom.



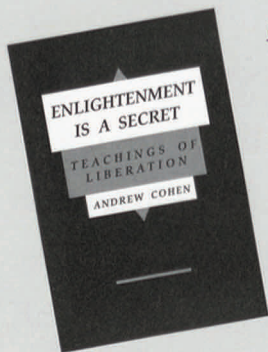
THE THRILL OF THE UNKNOWN An Interview with Andrew Cohen

#A024

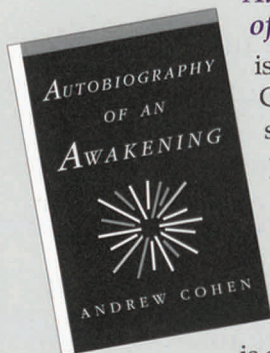
This new audio release features a powerfully engaging interview with Andrew Cohen in which he explodes many of the reigning myths about

Enlightenment and challenges us to consider the thrilling possibility of actually becoming an expression of this profoundly awakened condition ourselves. Recorded in New York City in April 1994 with noted radio host and interviewer Len Belzer.

BOOKS

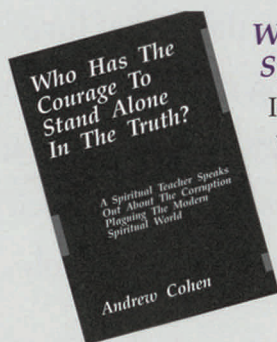


Enlightenment is a Secret
demystifies the meaning of Enlightenment while simultaneously conveying the mystery and immediacy of true enlightened understanding. (Also available in French and German. Please call for details.)



Autobiography of an Awakening

is a portrayal of Andrew Cohen's uncompromising search for liberation, his profound awakening, and finally his painful struggle to come to terms with the discrepancy between his teacher's realization and his own. The essence of his story is a captivating and provocative inquiry into the nature of Enlightenment.



Who Has The Courage To Stand Alone In The Truth?

In this compilation of selected writings, Andrew Cohen speaks out about the compromise and apathy that are accepted as the norm in the spiritual world.

Books are available at bookstores or directly from Moksha Foundation.

Additional copies of this issue and back issues of *What is Enlightenment?* are available from Moksha Foundation.

<i>A Passion for Death</i>	January 1992
<i>Corruption, Purity and Enlightenment</i>	July 1992
<i>Descent From Heaven</i>	January 1993
<i>What is the Relationship Between Love and Truth?</i>	July 1993
<i>Cynicism: The Modern Spiritual Predicament</i>	January 1994

Booklets of Andrew Cohen's teachings are also available in French, German, Dutch, Hebrew and Tibetan. (Please call for details.)

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*Videos need to be in PAL format to be played on most European or Pacific Rim VCRs. (Please include an extra \$10.00 for PAL tapes when ordering from the USA.)

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“The spiritual life is not only a personal matter. It has to do with the human condition as a whole. None of us as individuals are half as independent or separate from the whole as we think we are.

We’re like just a little dot in this mass that is trying to evolve.

We have to prove that evolution is possible. Then the spiritual life really begins to mean something.

Not just because we begin to feel better or we’re suddenly able to think more clearly, but because the law of love is actually manifesting itself through us and through those around us in a way that has real evolutionary significance for the whole.”

Andrew Cohen

