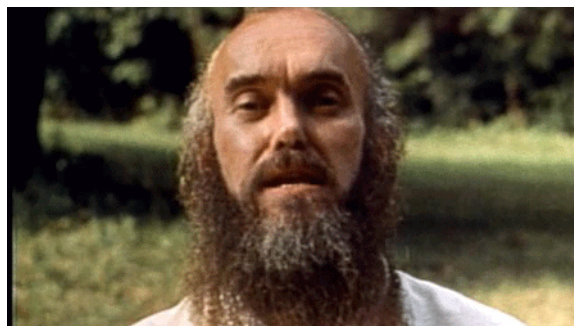
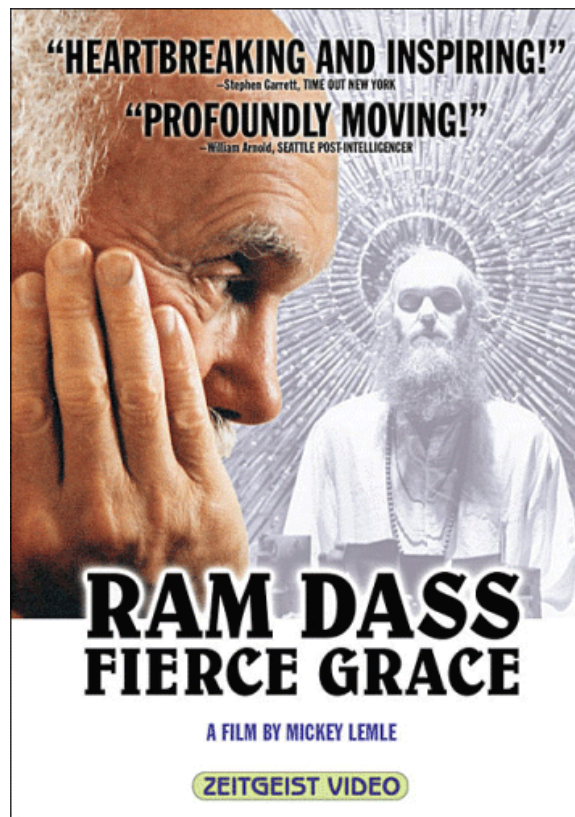


RAM DASS: FIERCE GRACE -- ILLUSTRATED SCREENPLAY

directed by Mickey Lemle
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[Ram Dass] The yogi is able to place the candle of his awareness, or his attention, in a niche within himself



where the winds do not make the candle flame move.



[Ram Dass 1969]



That is where a sound, or a sight, or a smell,



or a taste, or a sensation on the skin does not distract him.



What is left to distract him, of course, are still his own thoughts, his memories, his plans.



And it is here that the discipline that the yogi must impose upon himself becomes exquisitely difficult, and something requiring an extraordinary amount of patience.



LEMLE PICTURES



PRESENTS



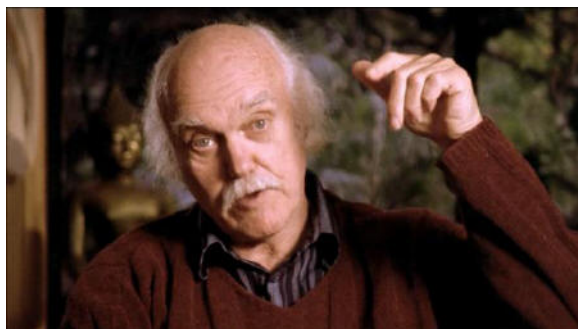
[Ram Dass] I was in my bedroom.



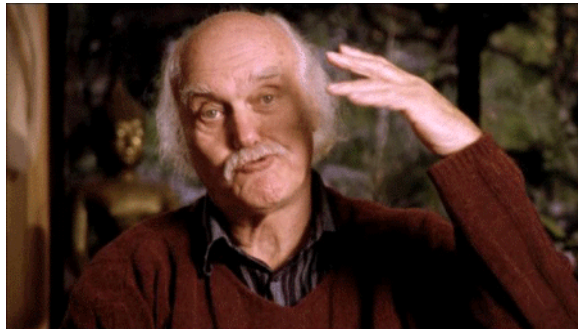
I was laying in bed thinking through my book about aging.



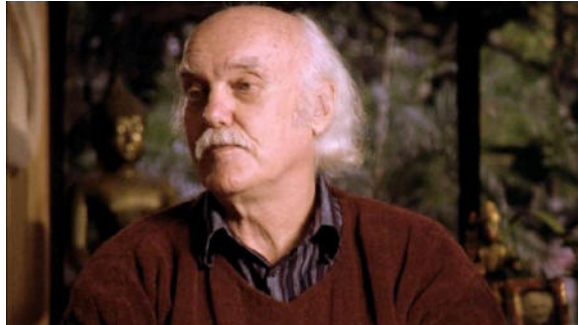
At that time, I fell out of bed.



That was probably the moment when I first stroked,



when I got stroked.



RAM DASS
FIERCE GRACE

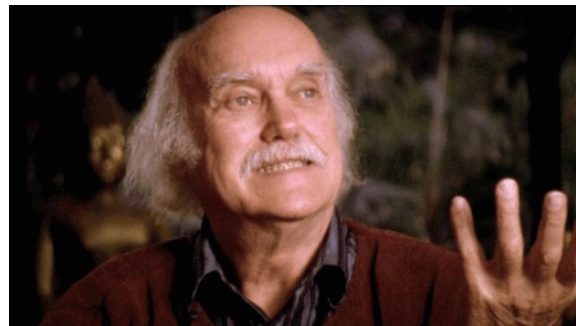
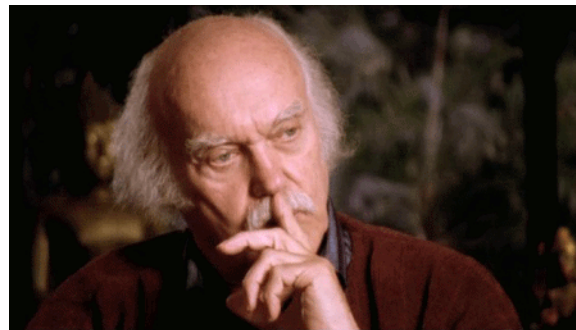
*RAM DASS
FIERCE GRACE*

A FILM BY
MICKEY LEMLE

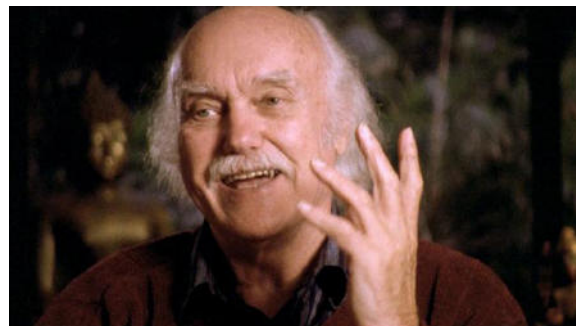
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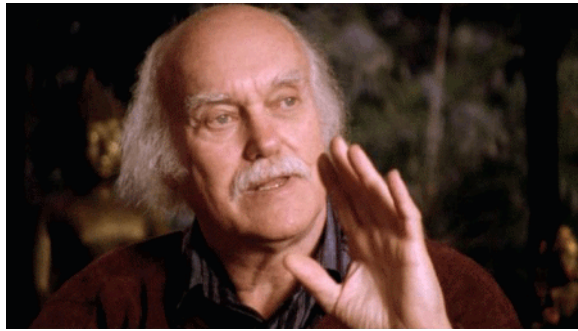
[Dr. Larry Brilliant, Co-Founder of the SEVA Foundation] The night of the stroke, Jai called me and asked me to go to the hospital. And I went to the Kaiser Hospital on the peninsula, and I was there when they brought the ambulance in. And I thought he was dead. If not dead, there was a gossamer-thin thread that separated him from death.



[Ram Dass] What's extraordinary is that I didn't have a spiritual thought,



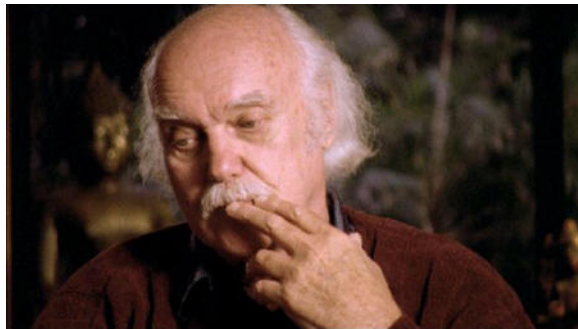
a "I'm dying, I'm going tere [sic]."



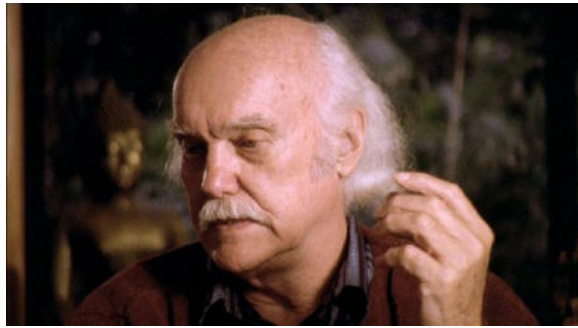
No, none of those.



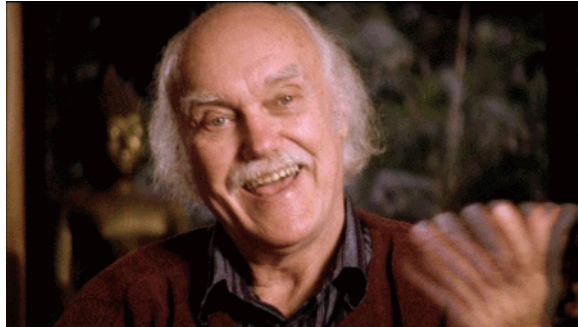
All I remember is looking at the pipes on the ceiling.



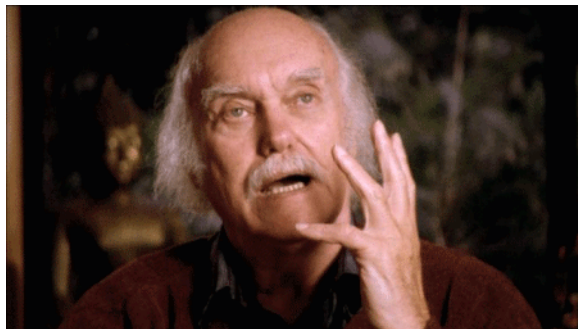
[Dr. Larry Brilliant, Co-Founder of the SEVA Foundation] He was in a very gentle and open space to the extent that he was there at all. It was pretty amazing, his recovery.



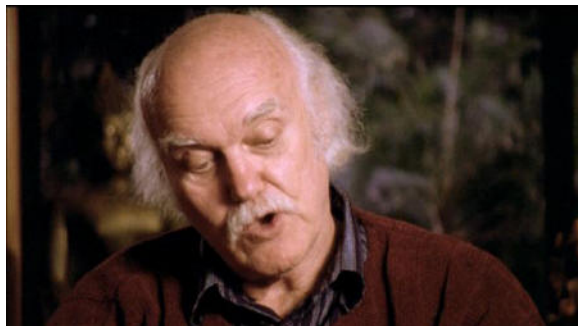
But here I am, Mr. Spiritual,



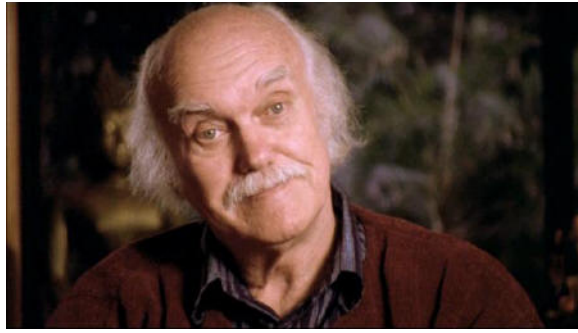
and in my own death,



I didn't, I didn't, I didn't, well, I didn't orient towards the spirit.



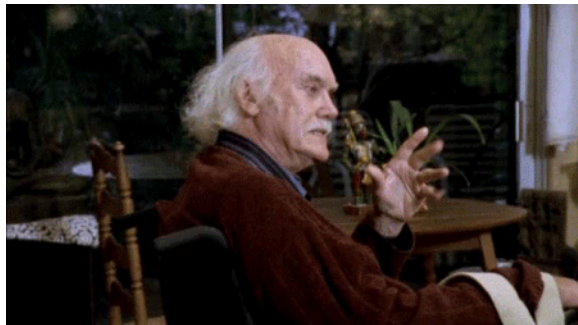
It shows me I have some work to do.



It shows me because that's the, that's the test. That's the test. So I flunked the test.



I'm using silence as a ... as a ...



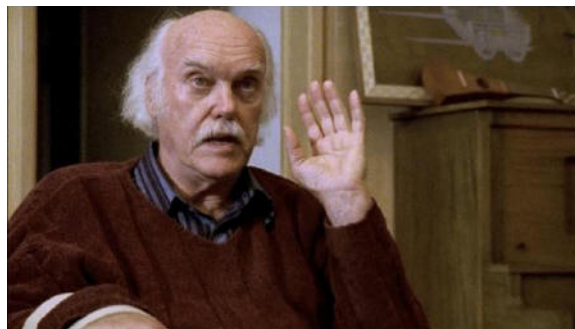
[Shana Roth, Speech Therapist]



It's too frustrating to come up ... come up ... you know ...



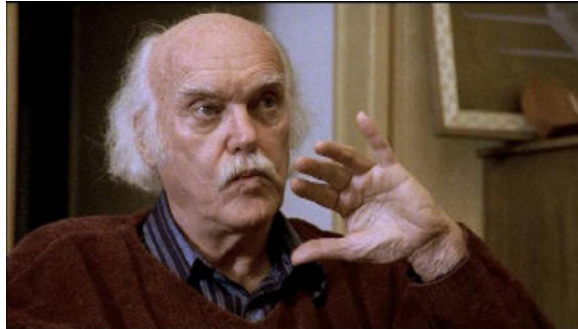
[Shana Roth, Speech Therapist] Well, let me tell you what a lot of listeners are thinking, if I may. Basically, the rules of discourse, and what people learn in terms of communicating with one another, is that there isn't supposed to be silence. Many, many people are very uncomfortable with the silence when they're talking. I mean, it's a dialogue, right?



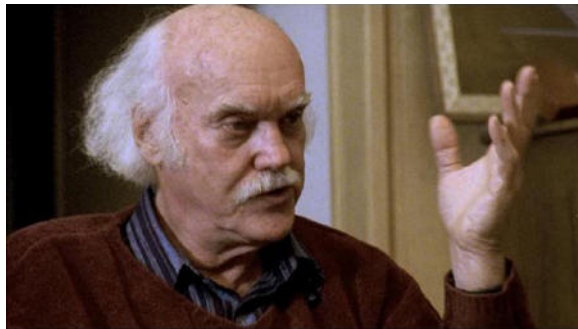
[Ram Dass] The word gets lost and, yeah, okay ...



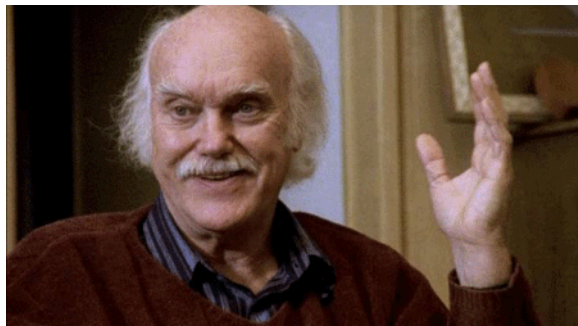
[Shana Roth, Speech Therapist] Yeah, keep going with that thought.



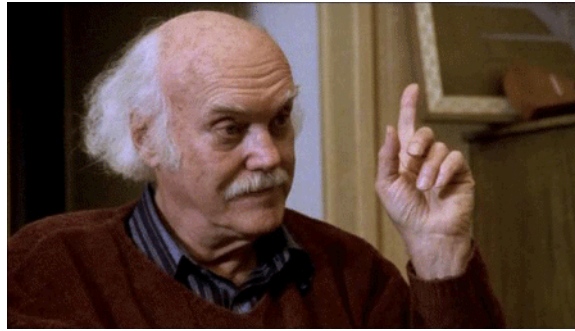
[Ram Dass] The concepts exist and then they're clothed with words, and I just don't ...



and the clothing closet isn't ...



isn't ... isn't



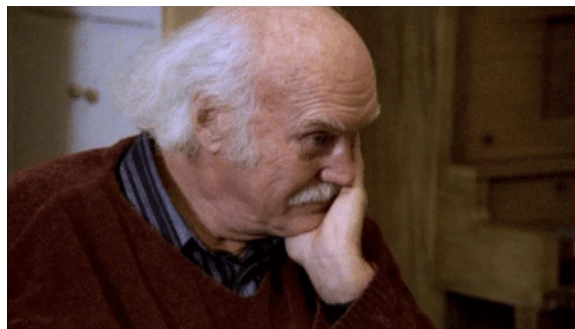
open.



[Shana Roth, Speech Therapist] Nice analogy. And when you get stuck, and you can't find the word, then you remember that you have a whole variety of resources that you can use now: analogies, which you did when you were talking about the closet and the clothes in the closet -- that's an analogy. It helped me understand how you felt about your word-finding difficulties. Okay?



[Ram Dass] What do you ... what do you do with people who insist on finishing your sentences?





[Shana Roth, Speech Therapist] That's an excellent question. Put up your hands. And if you can think, say, "let me finish." And tell them this means, "Could you help me here think of the word?" When you're using your strategies, you know, "it's like this," or "it sounds like this. Help me."

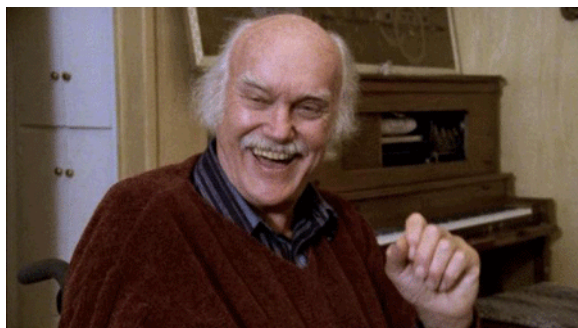


[Ram Dass] It's what-do-you-call-it game?

[Shana Roth, Speech Therapist] Right. Charades.

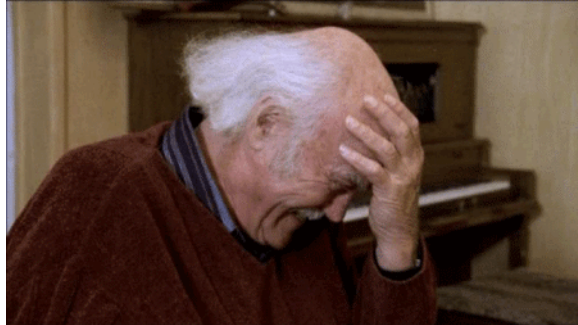


[Ram Dass] See?





[Shana Roth, Speech Therapist] Oh, I'm sorry. I just did it! You asked me, though.



[Wavy Gravy, Cosmic Clown] Ram Dass was the master of the one-liner, or the two-liner, or the ocean-liner.

[Mickey Lemle] And now?

[Wavy Gravy, Cosmic Clown] And now he's taken the pregnant pause to new dimensions.



[Physical Therapist] This shoulder is so tight.



[Ram Dass] It's usually right in there.

[Physical Therapist] Does it hurt right now?



[Ram Dass] Yes!

[Physical Therapist] Yes!



Lift up just a little bit more here.

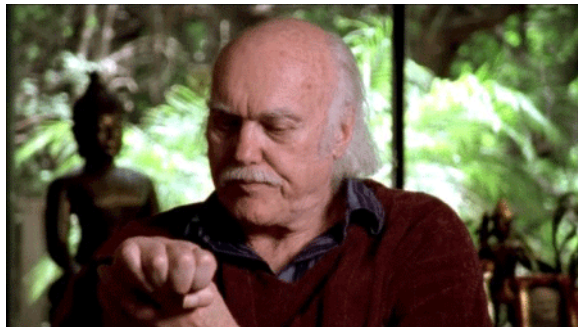
[Ram Dass] Yes! You know, this isn't who I expected to be. This is all new, because my expectations about me old didn't have this stroke in it.



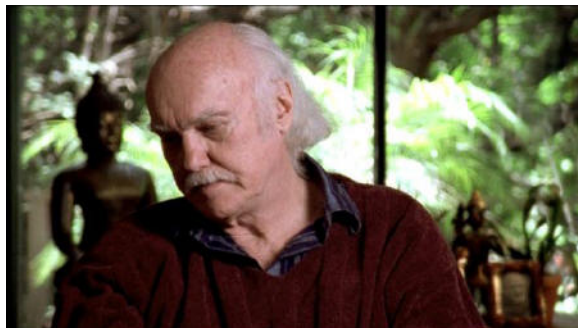
[Physical Therapist] So you lean back a little bit.



[Ram Dass] The suffering comes when you try to hold on to continuity, like things I can't do.

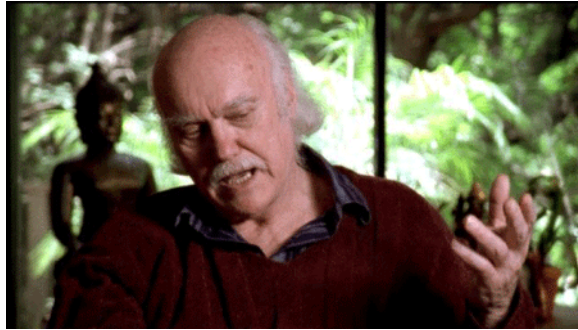


I can't ... I can't shift my car.

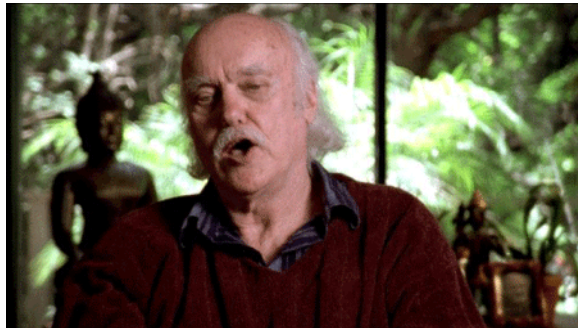




I got a new car before I stroked. And now, I get into that car, in the seat next to the driver ...



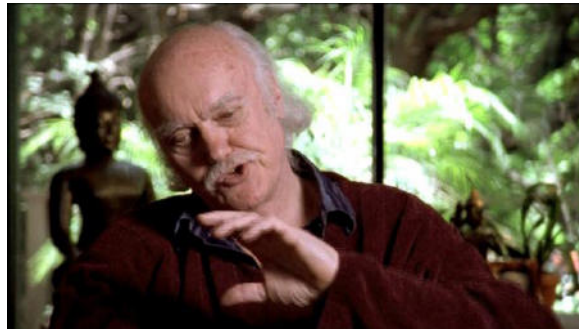
my attendant drives the car,



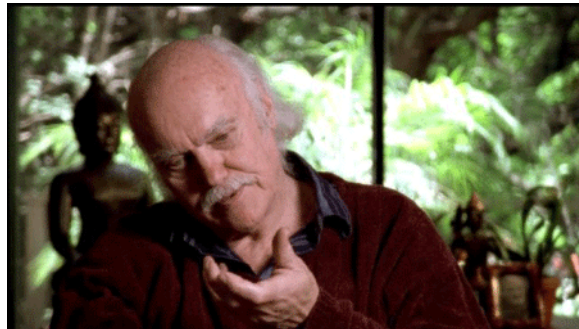
and I can either be a driver,



which is going to make me suffer on that trip, or somebody who is chauffeured.



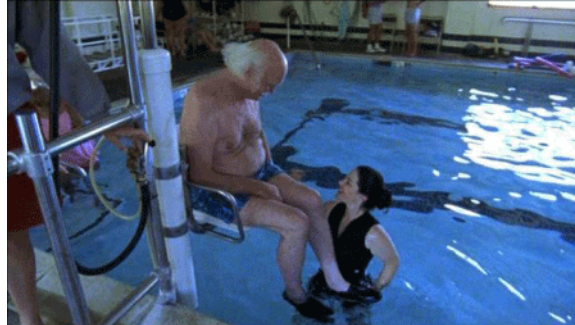
It's just another ...



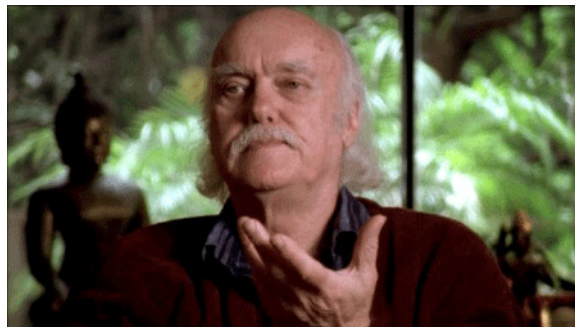
[Physical Therapist] All set?



[Physical Therapist] No. This leg, straighten them out.



[Ram Dass] I'm surrounded with therapists, doctors, aids who see me as a stroke-victim.



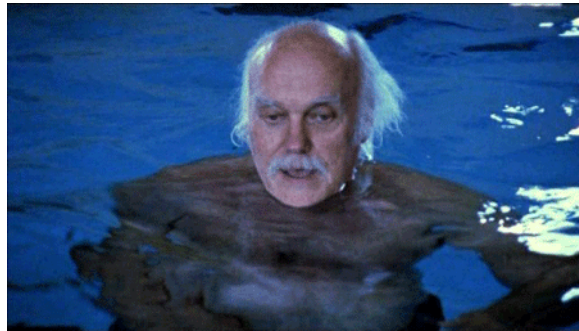
They want me to try to change it. The symptoms: the leg, the arm, and the speech, and the mouth, and swallowing, and blup, blup, blup,



it's like the sirens in the rocks, my consciousness. I mean, I'd like to be free.



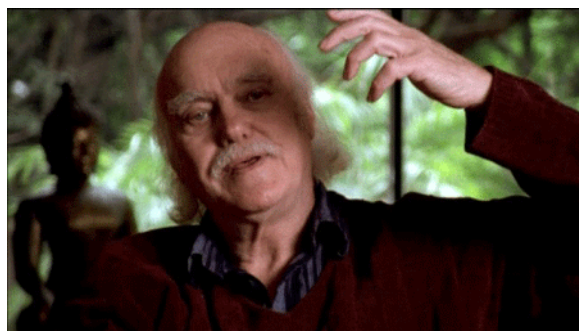
[Physical Therapist] Pass the left foot with the right.



[Ram Dass] Pass the left foot ...



Something like a stroke, it's so captivating to the consciousness.



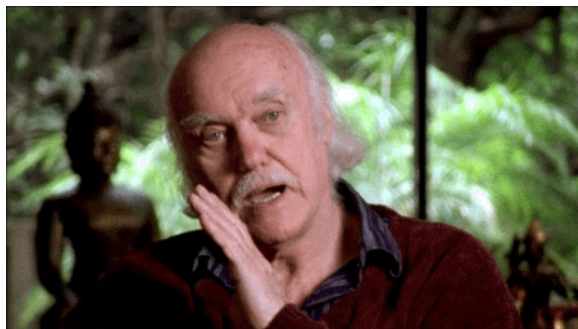
Like I want to see how this captivates my mind -- the stroke -- and then I want to pull my consciousness out and be free in the middle of the stroke.



That's like an experiment, an experiment of consciousness.



I feel like an advance guard, an advance parley that calls back to the baby boomers.



And now I call back about aging. Because aging and things like stroke are going to be in their, in their present much sooner than they think.



[Steve Isser] Rachel is our daughter, our first born. By the way, she brought Anita and I together.



First, we lived in Santa Cruz, then moved to Berkeley, and moved to Ashland.



And we had only been here a year, and Rachel was 11, still meeting friends, making friends here in Ashland.



And one of the reasons we moved up to Ashland, you know, we wanted to raise our family in a town that's smaller and a little safer, and away from the main streets of the city.



And one day, she said, "I'm going to go and meet Deanna at the college field," or something like that. And she gave me a big smile -- it was right around lunch time -- and took off.



And that was the last time I saw her alive. And there was some sort of commotion over by the stadium press box, over by the college. And the cops were all over the place. And they brought me in up to the press box, and there she was. And she was lying there, and I reached down and "Rachel, Rachel." And I reached down to hug her, and the police pulled me off and said, "You can't disturb a crime scene." He held me back. And we were blown away. And she was gone.



[Anita Isser] I felt like my heart had just been ripped open and I just did not see how I could go on.



[Steve Isser] I think I felt that I would never get past the pain. The pain would always be there, and there would be no future. And that our kids would be damaged, and Anita and I would be damaged. And our whole family life would be ruined, and there would be no future, no place to go to, nothing to hope for. And I think Ram Dass's letter was like a catalyst.



[Anita Isser] [reading letter] "Steve and Anita: Rachel finished her brief work on earth and left the stage in a manner that leaves those of us left behind with a cry of agony in our hearts as the fragile threads of faith are dealt with so violently. Is anyone strong enough to stay conscious through such teachings as you are receiving?

Probably very few, and even they would only have a whisper of equanimity and spacious peace amidst the screaming trumpets of their rage, grief, horror and desolation. I cannot assuage your pain with any words, nor should I. For your pain is Rachel's legacy to you. Not that she or I would inflict such pain by choice, but there it is, and it must burn it's purifying way to completion.



You may emerge from this ordeal more dead than alive, where something within you dies when you bear the unbearable. And it is only in that dark night of the soul that you are prepared to see as God sees, and to love as God loves. Now is the time to let your grief find expression. No false strength.



Now is the time to sit quietly and speak to Rachel, and thank her for being with you these few years, and encourage her to go on with her work knowing that you will grow in compassion and wisdom from this experience. In my heart I know that you and she will meet again and again, and recognize the many ways in which you have known each other. And when you meet, you will in a flash know what now it is not given to you to know, why this had to be the way it was.



Your rational minds can never understand what has happened. Your hearts, if you can keep them open to God, will find their own intuitive way.



Rachel came through you to do her work on earth, which included her manner of death.



Now her soul is free and the love that you can share with her is invulnerable to the winds of changing time and space. In that deep love, include me, too. So much love, Ram Dass."



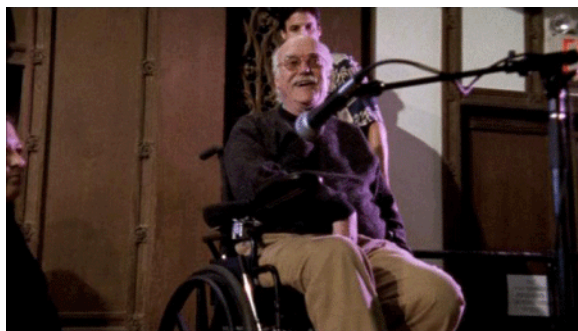
[Steve Isser] I think we spent the next six months working with all that was in that letter.



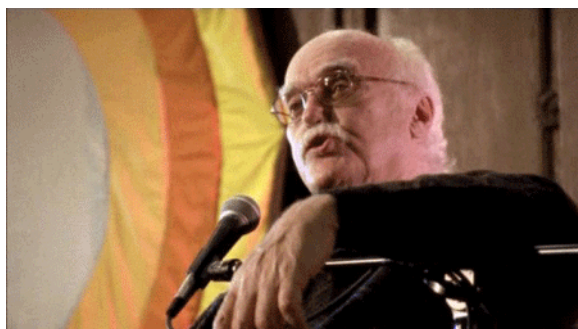
[Anita Isser] And I heard the truth in the letter, and it was just very, very meaningful. It was the light, a light at the end of my tunnel, I think. I thought, if I could work with it, if I could work with some of these ideas, if I could work with some of that, I can go on.



[Crowd] [Loud applause]



[Ram Dass] [Sighs]



I've been, uh,



stroked.

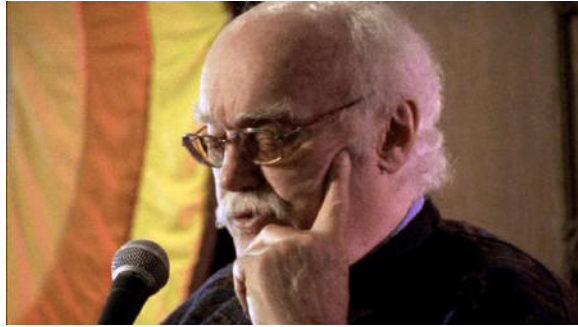


If you stay in the stroke, down in the ego, suffering, suffering.



But if you add into it the soul, the witness, the witness ...





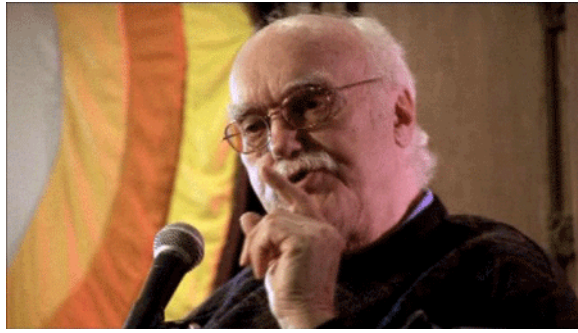
uh huh -- stroke.



That stroke. I'm in pain. The witness says, "I'm witnessing."



"I'm witnessing" -- that's not very painful. I'm witnessing the pain.



Physical pain. It is a worthy adversary of my spiritual practice.



All I can give you is a little of my faith ...



faith that there is a beloved.



We each have melodramas. And we chop them up and put them in the salad,



the salad for the beloved.



And your lives -- our lives -- are grist for the mill. Grist for the mill.





I was born Richard Alpert.



I was born into a very prominent Jewish family in Boston.



There were three boys: my two older brothers ...



and me.



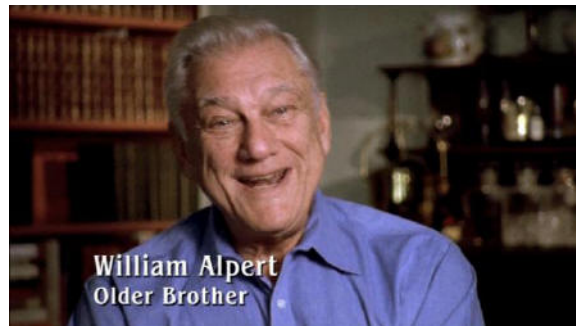
[William Alpert, Older Brother] Richard as a child was, I would say, the star of the family.



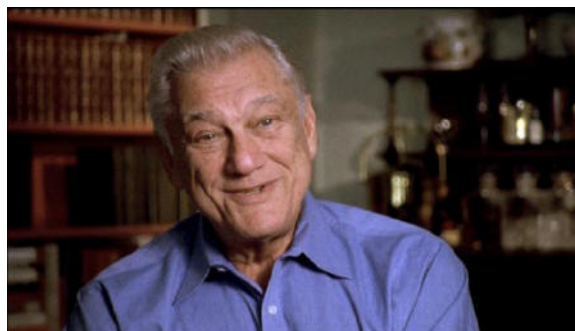
He really was loved by everybody. He was intriguing and engaging, as a baby and a youngster.



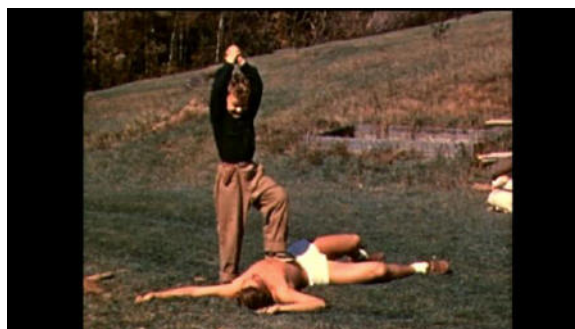
Sometimes we were a little pushy with Richard when my brother and I would come back from the movies, and Richard of course was sound asleep.



And we'd wake him up and say, "Richard, get up and sing the Hut Sut song." So he'd stand up in his bed like a good little soldier and sing, "Hut-Sut Rawlson on the rillerah add a little brawla, brawla soo it."



And we did many things like this to Richard. He was like the family mascot. Everybody loved him.





Our father George was one of the most preeminent lawyers in the city of Boston.



He was president of New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad.



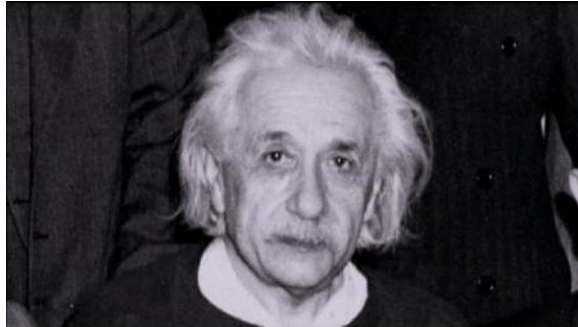
And he didn't stop there.



He was the first person who became effective in creating Brandeis University,



afterwhich he was one of the leading founders of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.



That was his style.



My mother was also involved in many charities.



That was just our life.



Our home in New Hampshire, we called it "The Farm."



I don't know why, but that's what we did.



Because we never really farmed anything. At one time we had a few vegetables that were growing, but nothing much.



About 300 acres, a big, beautiful, rambling place. A big barn. All sorts of things.



A three-hole golf course. One of the last things we did is dad decided we should have golf so we could play three holes,



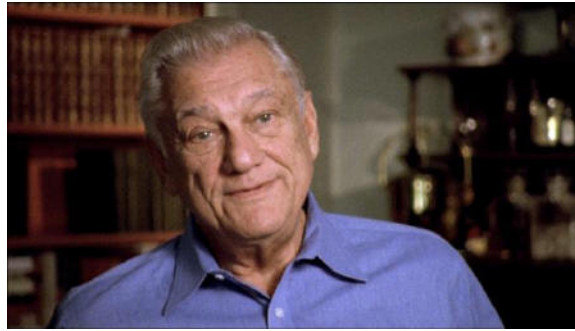
and play a little tennis,



and go down to the waterfront and do a little water skiing.



My father bought a Criss-Craft.



And it was just put into the water, and Richard jumped in. Now he's turned the engine on, and the throttle is on the steering wheel, and there's a gear shift for forward and reverse. Richard, who of course figured he was driving a car, and he'd go into first, then second, and third. So he pulled it into what he thought was first gear, and in about four seconds, smashed the propeller, bent the shaft, and that was the end of that. We had the boat, I'd say, a minute and a half. Something like that. That was Richard.



But we started to take note of his accomplishments.



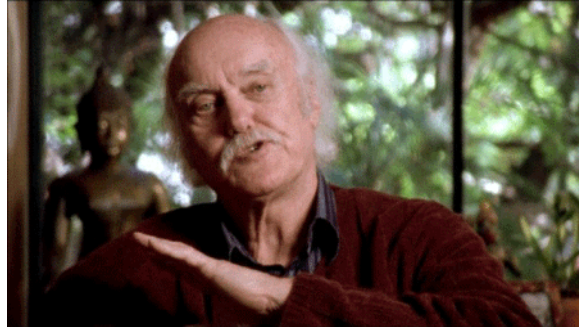
He got his bachelor's degree at Tufts,



and then his master's degree at Wesleyan University, and his doctorate at Stanford.



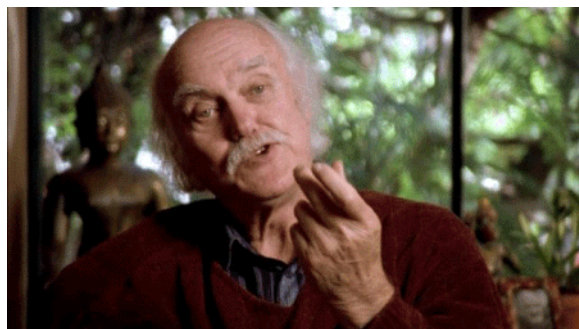
Then he got a job teaching at Harvard.



[Ram Dass] Those faculty meetings: silver service of tea, big chairs.



The first time I went to those faculty meetings and I came walking through Harvard Yard, I just thought,



"The world is my oyster."



I was a completely spit and polish Harvard professor.



That was a culmination for me.



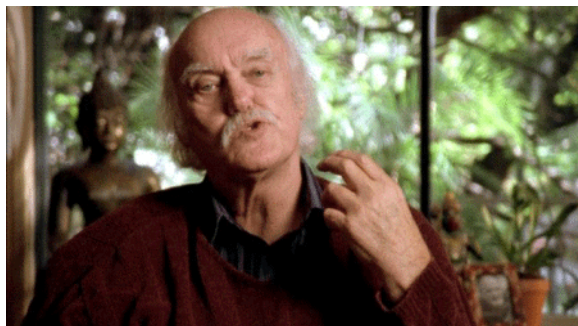
I had a corner office, and oh God, I was riding high.



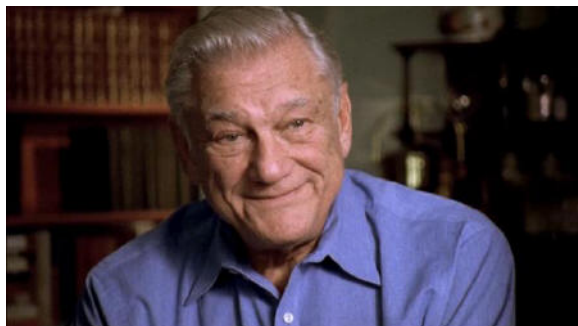
And then, into the office next door, which was a little office,



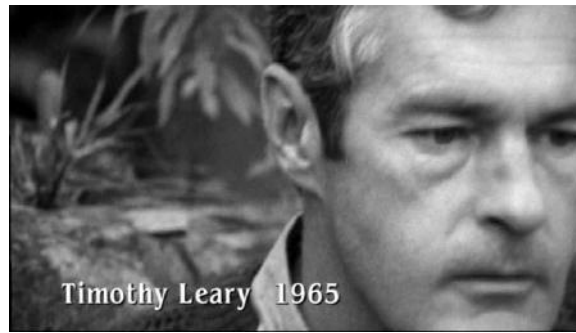
moved Tim.



He was just wild. He was just wild.



[William Alpert, Older Brother] I thought Tim was a nut in that he provoked situations which didn't have to be put on the table. He seemed to get some pleasure out of sticking his finger in an electric light socket. But that was Tim.



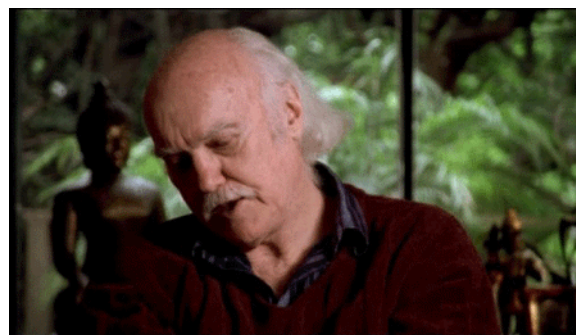
[Timothy Leary, 1965] I took Mexican mushrooms, so-called magic mushrooms of Mexico, and I learned more about my brain and its possibilities,



and I learned more about psychology in the five hours after taking these mushroom, than I had in the preceding 15 years of studying, human research and psychology.



And since that day, which is exactly five years ago this week, I've done practically nothing except continuous exploration.



[Ram Dass] So I bugged Tim so I could have some psychedelics.



And that experience freed me. I became identified with the spiritual being inside of myself.



[Ram Dass] So you start to have this dissociative experience, where all that you become is awareness, is a point of awareness. That's all that's left.



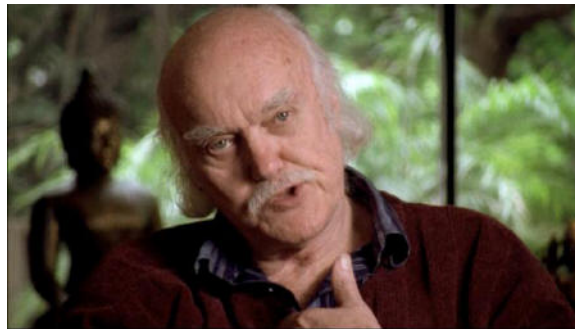
I remember the first time this happened to me, as professor went, and middle-class boy went, and pilot went, and all of my games were like going off in the distance.



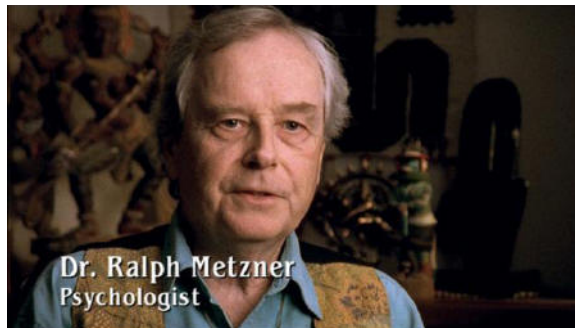
I got this terrible panic because indeed, I was going to cease to exist.



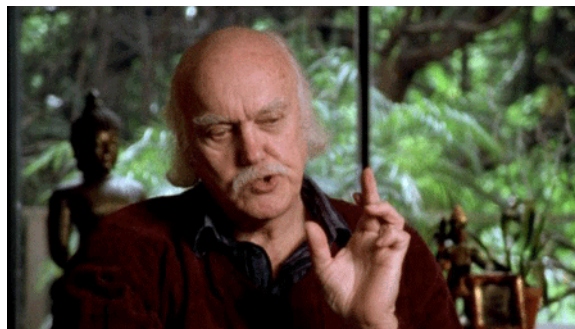
And I got the panic which is the panic that precedes the psychological death. Because indeed, Richard Alpert was dying at that point. And the panic was, "No, stop, stop! I've got to hold on to something so I'll know who I am." And Timothy, the wise old Timothy always says things like, "Trust your nervous system."



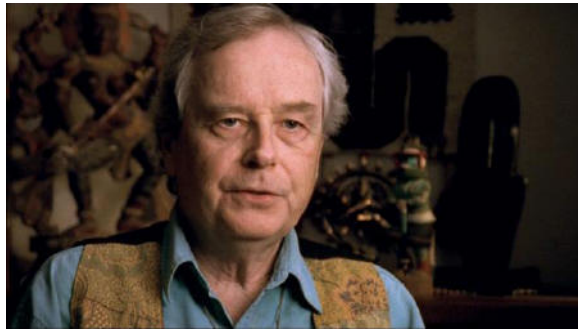
[Ram Dass] From then on, I've been somebody who, in here is the cue.



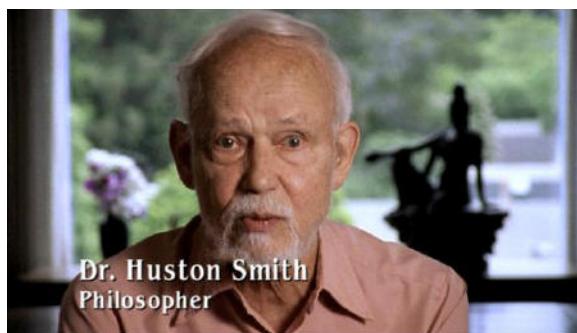
[Dr. Ralph Metzner, Psychologist] We were research psychologists, so suddenly there is this unusual experience, so how do you research it?



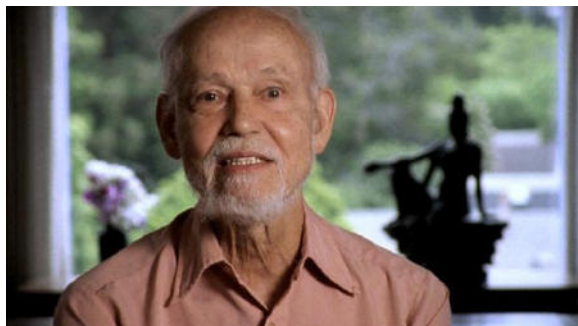
[Ram Dass] There were two experiments: one was the prison project where we were trying to show these drugs give you a reorientation about life.



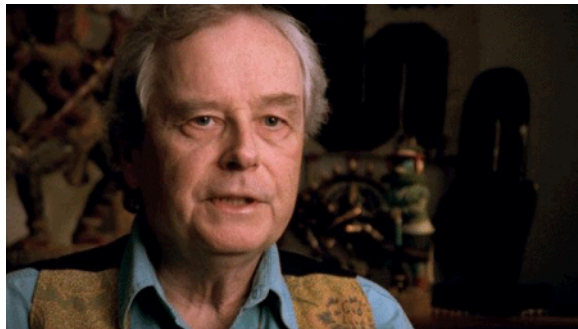
[Dr. Ralph Metzner, Psychologist] Then also did a study which then led to the famous Good Friday study of using the set and setting idea to really test whether you could induce a religious experience, by taking people who were into theology, studying to be divinity ministers, and doing it in a setting during a religious service on Good Friday, and then having a double-blind study where some half the group got psilocybin and half the group didn't.



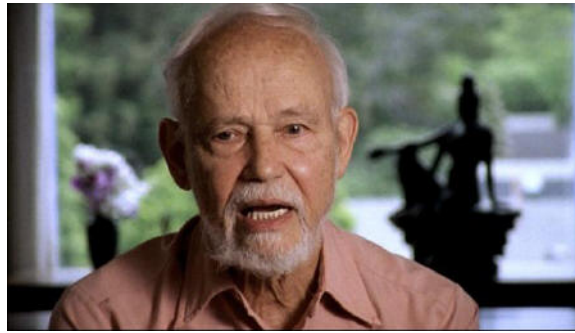
[Dr. Huston Smith, Philosopher] Nominally, I was one of the guides as having had some experience with the substance.



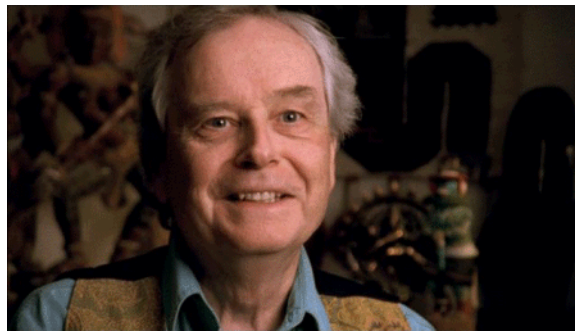
But all that went by the board when it turned out that I was one of the recipients of the psilocybin.



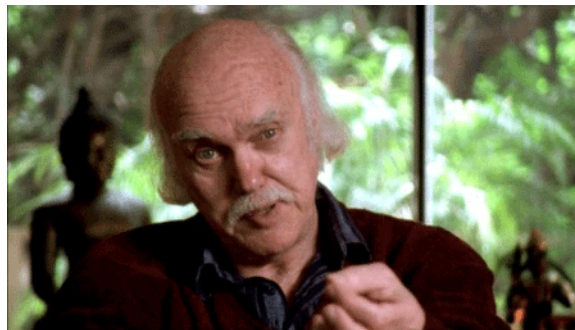
[Dr. Ralph Metzner, Psychologist] It was, you know, the first, and to this day really the only, I think, attempt to experimentally demonstrate or verify, induce, and evaluate a religious experience in the form of a psychological experiment.



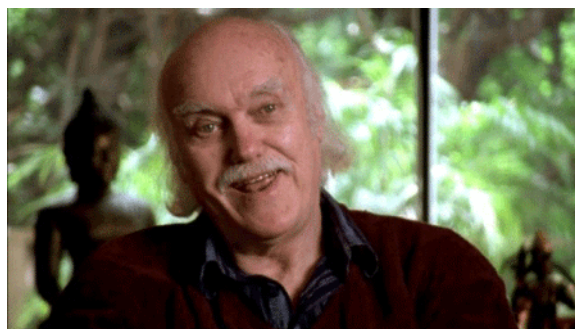
[Dr. Huston Smith, Philosopher] For me, it was the strongest experience I have had of the personal god.



[Dr. Ralph Metzner, Psychologist] And then the debate was, well, people who said, "Well, no, you could never have a mystical experience coming from an artificial substance." And the others said, "Well, why? Surely the experience itself should be the criterion of its validity rather than how it came about." And that debate went on and on and on.



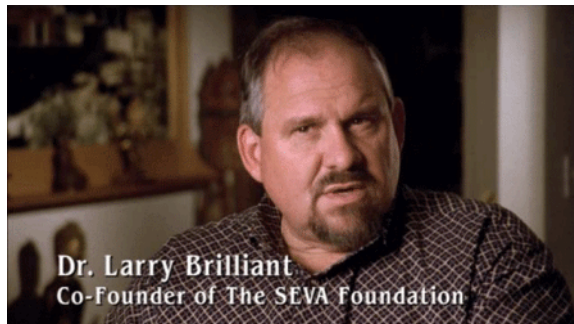
[Ram Dass] When we go on and say, "Here's a pill,



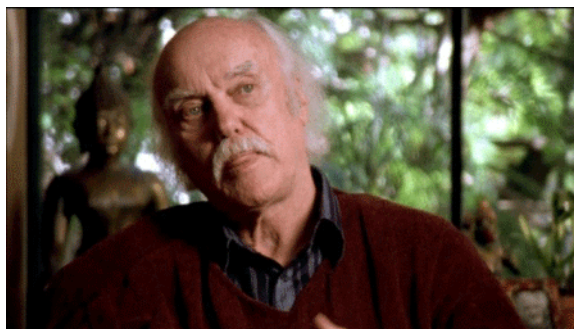
here's the same experience as Moses had, you can ...



[Dr. Ralph Metzner, Psychologist] But then at a certain point, then, the police move in, and *switch shifts over from health and science over into law enforcement and the judiciary system, which is a whole 'nother system which doesn't really know anything about the science* or care less really. What they care about is what's prohibited, and what should be prohibited, and all of that.



[Dr. Larry Brilliant, Co-Founder of the SEVA Foundation] We've lost a lot of very good friends to very bad drugs. And we've seen the exalted spirit that certain psychedelics, under certain conditions, can bring. And it would be disingenuous to deny that, just as it would be disingenuous to deny that religious and mystical experience from fasting, meditating and yoga. For me, it opened up a new world that my very conventional, very middle-class upbringing in Detroit, Michigan wouldn't have opened for me, that my training in medical school would have, if anything, have forbidden me to see. So I'm deeply grateful for those times and those experiments.



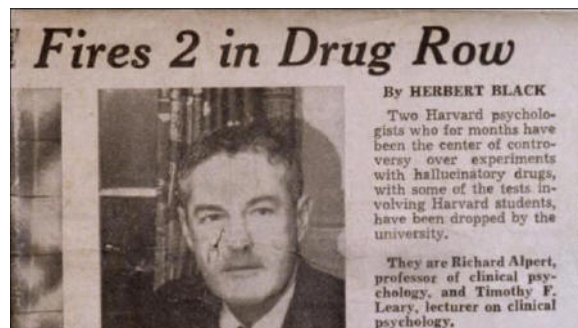
[Ram Dass] They really had, this drug research, in their crew.



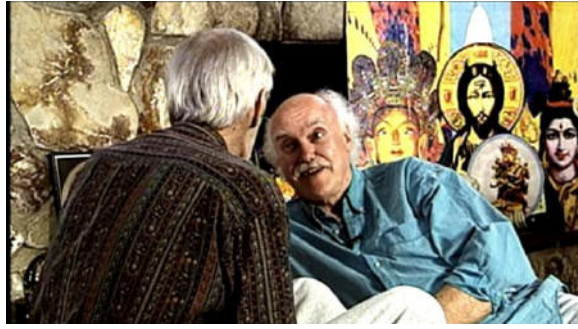
I was the first professor in this century, that was fired. Yeah.



[Dr. Ralph Metzner, Psychologist] Leary used the analogy, saying I expect a university like Harvard to sponsor research in consciousness-expanding drugs [read "religion expanding drugs"]



would be like expecting the Vatican to sponsor research in aphrodisiacs.



[Timothy Leary] You were on the tenure track.

[Ram Dass] I know I was. And you laughed. You laughed.

[Timothy Leary] If it weren't for me you would be a ...

[Ram Dass] I'd be somebody today.



[Timothy Leary] retired Harvard.

[Ram Dass] You blew my cover. You blew me apart.

[Timothy Leary] I ruined your economic career.

[Ram Dass] You did. You absolutely did.



[Ram Dass] This circular, on this end with the fireplace, that was my room.



We had been thrown out of Mexico, and Dominica, and of course Harvard,



after being thrown out, thrown out, thrown out, this is our resting place.



Peggy Hitchcock was part of our group,



and she said that her brothers were setting up a cattle ranch,



and the ranch had on it a large house.



They just had no use for it, and we did.



We did. We had parties to hold, and research and ...



["Dr." Ralph Metzner, psychologist] And then so a group of about 15 or 20 of us, initially, moved there and lived there, and tried to sort of put our lives together.



[Rosemary Woodruff Leary, Timothy Leary's former wife] Just about everything was going on at Millbrook.



It was an incredible place.



It had 64 rooms.



[Dr. Ralph Metzner, Psychologist] 62 rooms.



[Ram Dass] It's got 55 rooms



[Rosemary Woodruff Leary, Timothy Leary's former wife] It hasn't existed anywhere else in the world, and will probably never exist again, but for a very brief time it was a fairyland.



It was an interesting endeavor.



It was short-lived, and sometimes almost perfect.



[Ram Dass] We were protected so much in this estate, and I mean,



the culture was down at the gate.



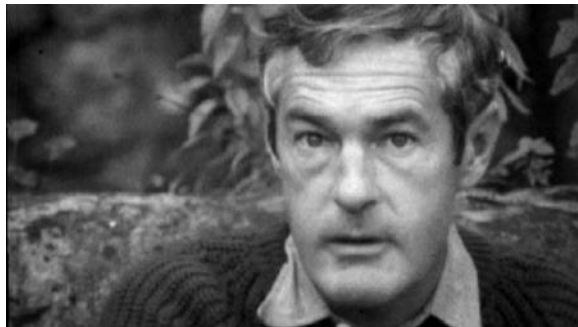
[Man] Dr. Leary, what are you up to here?



[Timothy Leary] We teach the "science" and art of ecstasy



We teach people how to turn on or how to go out of their minds. The point is you have to go out of your mind.



You have to go out of all of the static, symbolic ways in which you think, experience.



[Ram Dass] People would come from all over. There were poets, like Allen Ginsberg; philosophers, like Huxley, Huston Smith; all kinds of musicians, like Maynard Ferguson was living down at the gate house.



It was a very creative moment, it was a creative moment, in history.



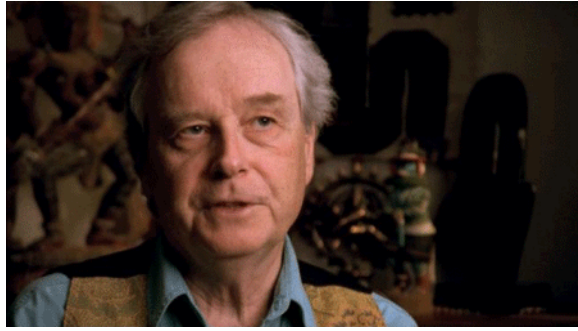
We were "experimenting" with consciousness.



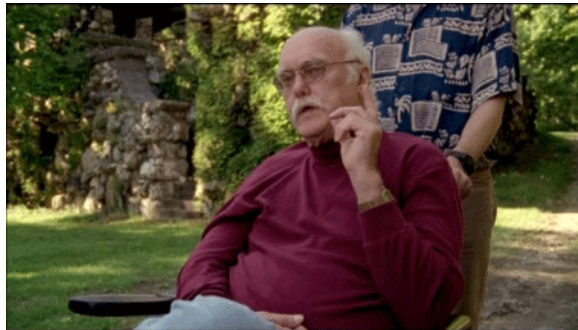
We were prodding the culture.



I do experiment here that were [inaudible], and we had a bottle of LSD. And we take LSD every ... for weeks.
For weeks. And this was an experimental unit, and we got to hate each other.



[Dr. Ralph Metzner, psychologist] Alpert was there, over there, and he talked about it. He got quite sick. I don't know how close he came to dying, but he got quite sick. And just taking LSD isn't healing. You know, if you've got an infection, you've got to treat the infection. Expanding your consciousness is not going to help you with that.



[Ram Dass] After the experiences here, I saw that going up, down, up, down, getting high ... getting high, getting high, getting high, wasn't satisfying. Wasn't satisfying.



Going to India after the psychedelics,



I came into a culture that recognized spirit.



I kept contacting people



who knew the consciousness and the levels,



and they didn't take acid.



When I went to India, my method was psychedelics.



When I came back from India, it was inside of me.



[Singing] Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna ...

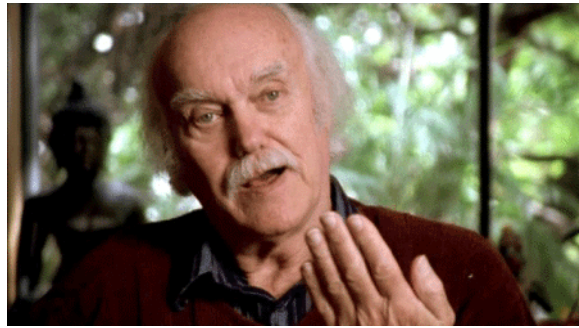




Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare, Hare Ram, Hare Ram



Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare, Hare Ram, Hare Ram.



[Ram Dass] Wow! A culture with these maps!





In going to India,



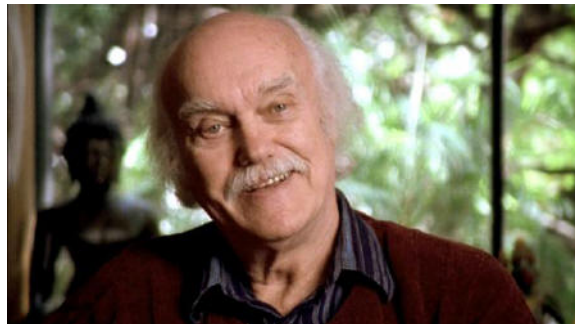
I was looking for somebody that could read



the maps of my consciousness.



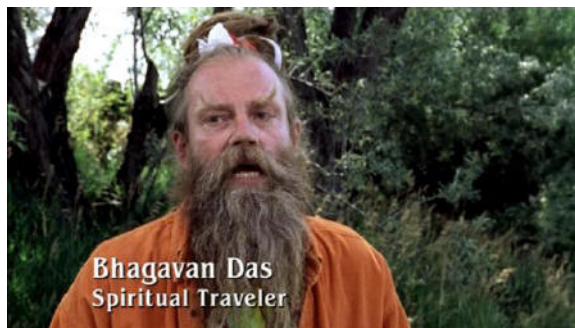
I found Maharaji.



He was the map.



I met Maharaji in a little temple in the mountains, the Himalayas. I had been traveling with a young Westerner who had been in India for many months. And so he knew his way around.



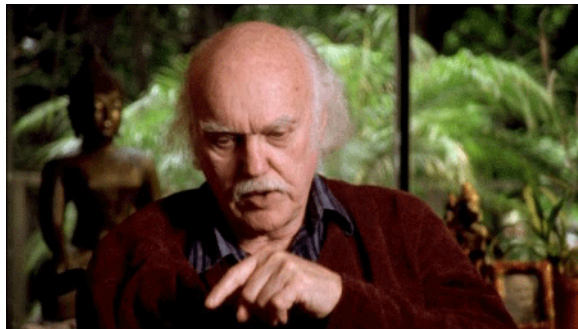
[Bhagavan Das, Spiritual Traveler] So I took him in the Land Rover up the mountains to meet Neem Karoli Baba, against his will.



He was really uptight, angry, didn't want to go. He was giving me a hard time.



He was mad because I was driving. He wanted to drive.



[Ram Dass] We stopped on the way, about a hundred miles from the temple. And we stopped, and I went outside the house -- and I --



stars, like stars, Van Gogh, Gogh stars -- and I thought of my mother. She was dead 6 months. And then I went inside. Then we went on to the guru.



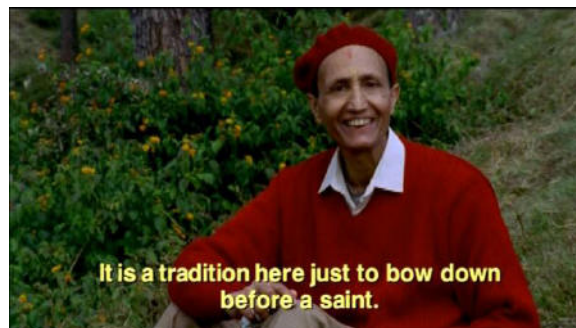
[K.K. Sah, Translator] Ram Dass first met Maharaj ji right here.



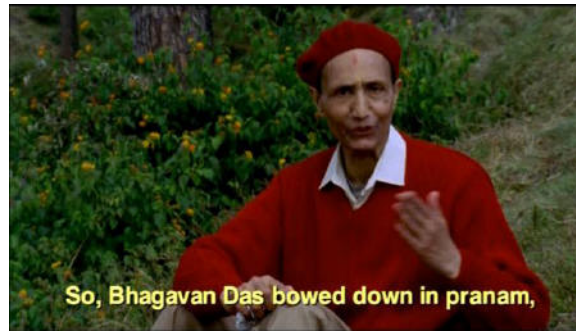
Maharaj ji was sitting here with all his devotees were here.



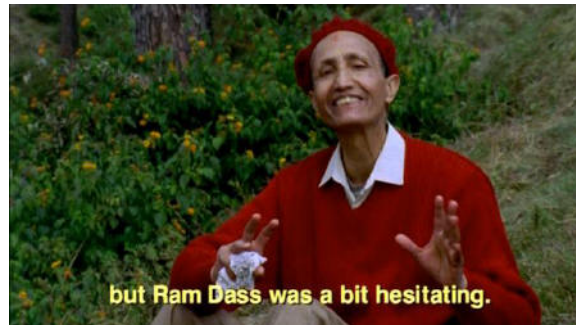
And he came here with Bhagavan Das.



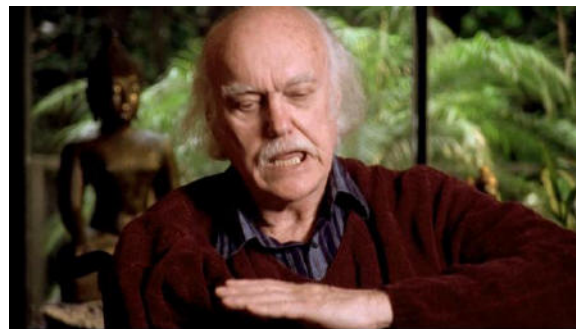
It is a tradition here just to bow down before a saint.



So, Bhagavan Das bowed down in pranam,

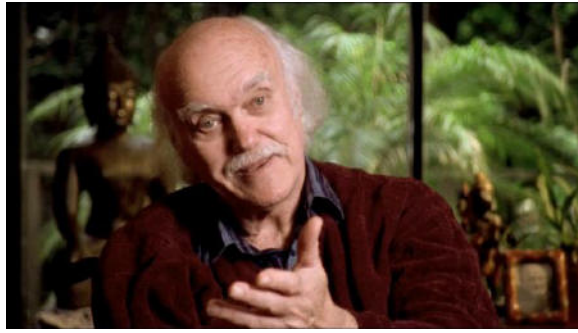


but Ram Dass was a bit hesitating.



[Ram Dass] He was laying on his belly on the ground touching the feet of the guru.





And I was Harvard professor. I wasn't going to go up and touch somebody's feet.



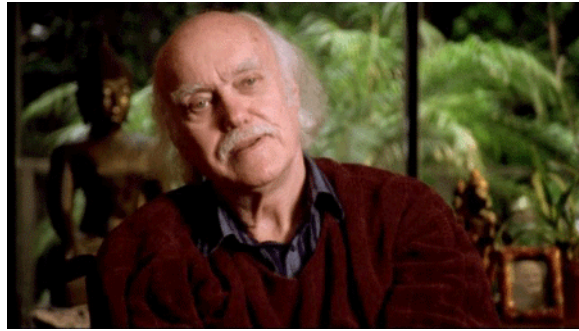
[K.K. Sah, Translator] He had his hands in his pockets,



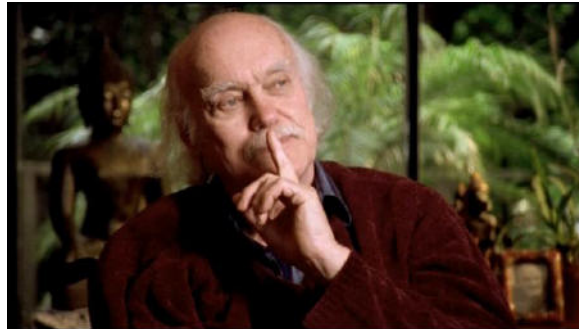
and was just watching.



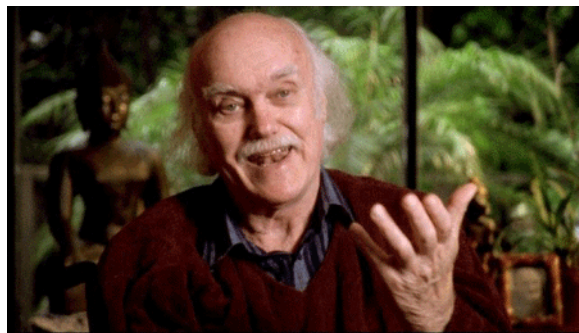
[Ram Dass] So he said, "Come, come. Sit down."



Then he said, "You were out under the stars thinking of your mother last night."



Which, which, I mean, a Harvard professor, you know, knowing, having been in cognitive research and stuff like that,



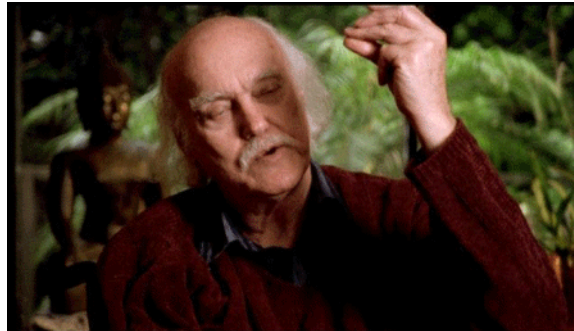
nothing made me ready for that.



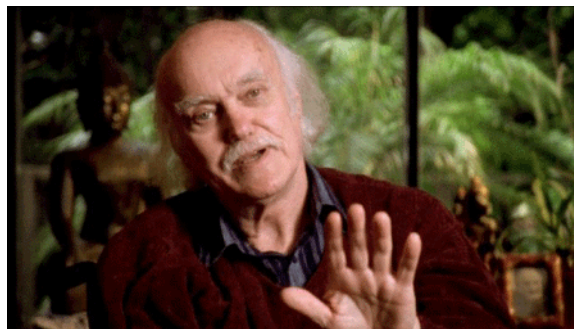
[K.K. Sah, Translator] "You were remembering your mother,



she died of a spleen."



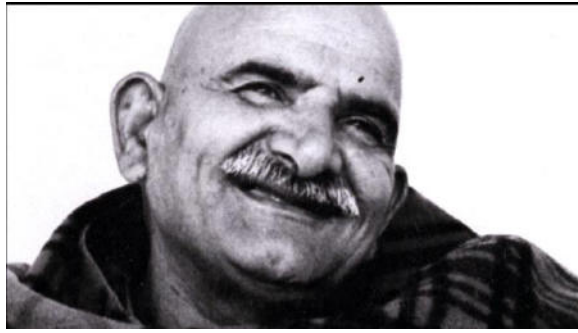
[Ram Dass] And that was the breakthrough.



That was the quieting my mind. Quieting my mind.



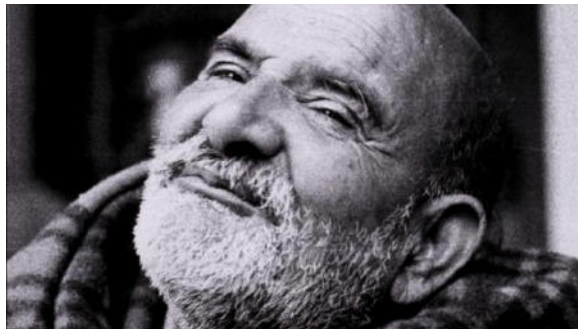
[Bhagavan Das, Spiritual Traveler] You know, it's like Jesus when he met the woman in the well, and told her everything she had ever done. That's what Maharaj ji would do: he would tell us everything that we'd been doing in the last parts of our lives. You're thinking, "Wow! He knows everything."



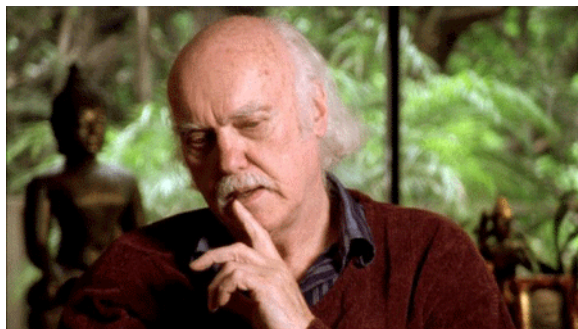
[Ram Dass] When Maharaji was near me, I was bathed in love.



And because he knew everything about me, that was like I was forgiven.



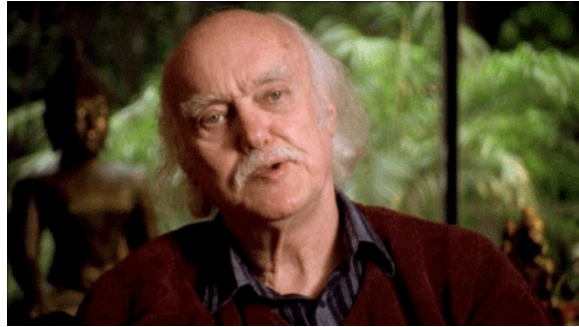
I think prior to that, I had a lot of things in my past I didn't want anybody to know.



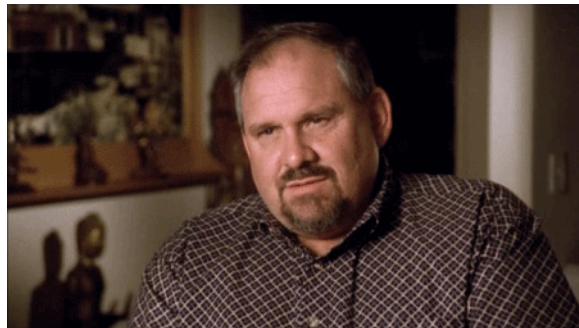
And I always felt, if they knew, they wouldn't love me. He knew, and he loved me.



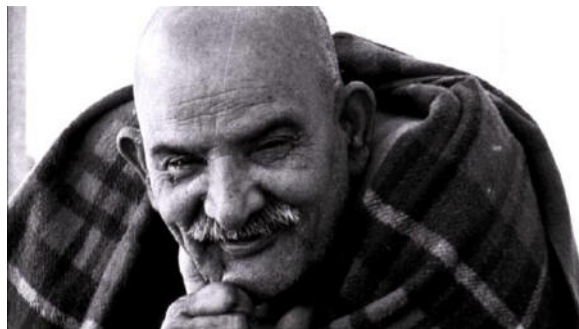
[Bhagavan Das, Spiritual Traveler] And then he was transformed into Baba Ram Dass before my very eyes. He just turned into this love. He just totally opened his heart, and got into his heart.



[Ram Dass] It was so beautiful. It was so beautiful. It was so beautiful.



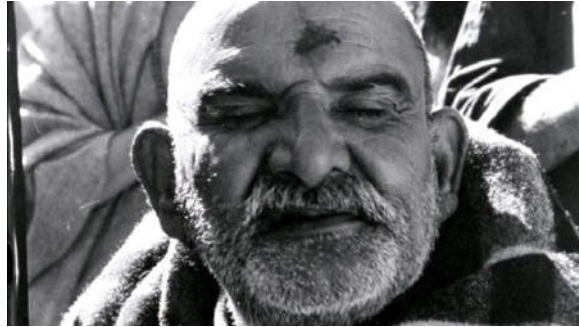
[Dr. Larry Brilliant, Co-Founder of the SEVA Foundation] How do I explain who Maharaji was, and how he did what he did? I don't have any explanation.



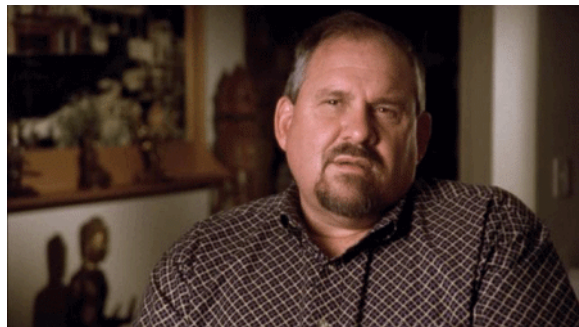
Maybe it was his love of God. I can't explain who he was.



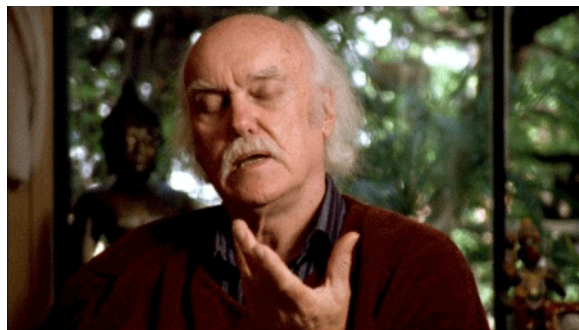
I can almost begin to understand how he loved everybody. I mean, that was sort of his job. He was a saint.



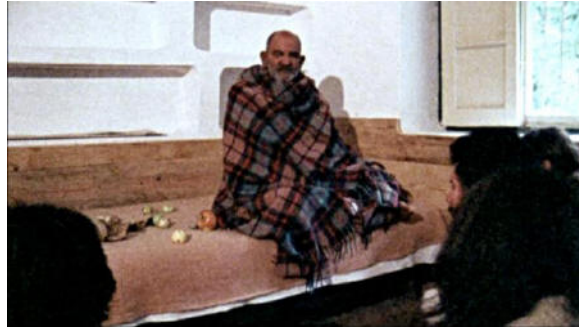
Saints are supposed to love everybody. That's not what has always so staggered me.



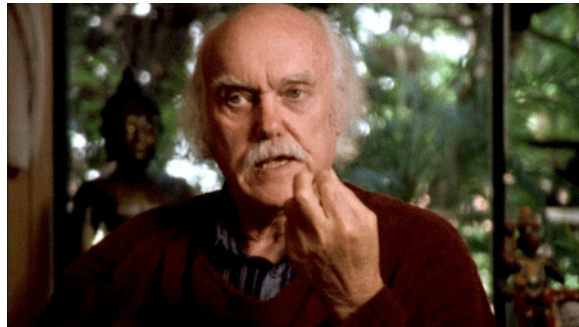
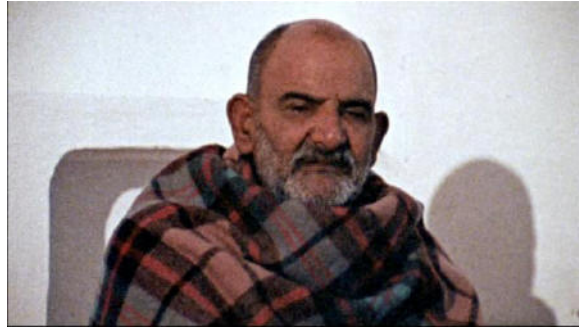
What staggered me is not that he loved everybody, but that when I was sitting in front of him, I loved everybody. That was the hardest thing for me to understand. How he could so totally transform the spirit of people who were with him and bring out not just the best in us, but something that wasn't even in us, we didn't know. I don't think any of us were ever as good or as pure or as loving in our whole life as we were when we were sitting in front of him.



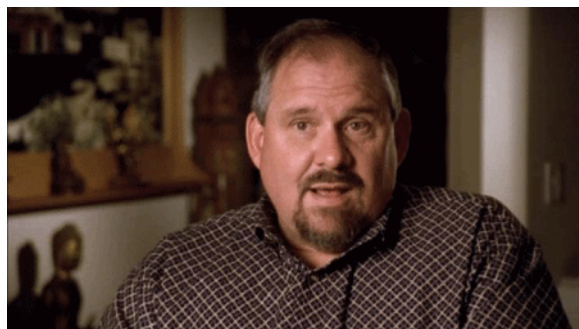
[Ram Dass] I see him just as a, as a doorway towards God. A doorway.



His consciousness was so playful with mine. It sucks you in.



In India they have an expression, "God, guru and self are one and the same." He's just like my inner self.



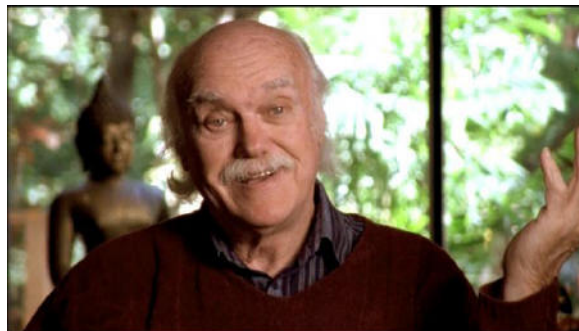
[Dr. Larry Brilliant, Co-Founder of the SEVA Foundation] The most common word that he ever said was "Ram," God's name, and the second most common was "Jau," "get out of here." And all the Westerners who would come to him, attracted like a magnet, he would always say, "Go away. Go away." No, I don't think he wanted anything ever from me or from any of us. We tried to give him things. You couldn't give him money. You couldn't do anything for him. There was nothing that he needed.



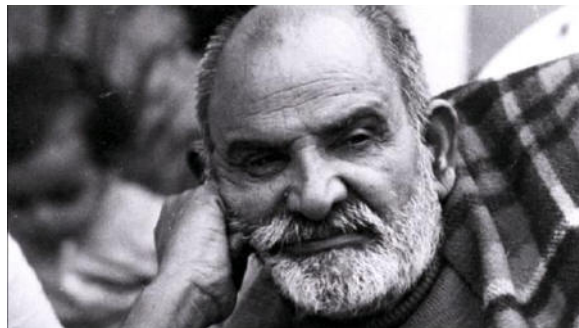
[Ram Dass] All he wanted was for people to be liberated,



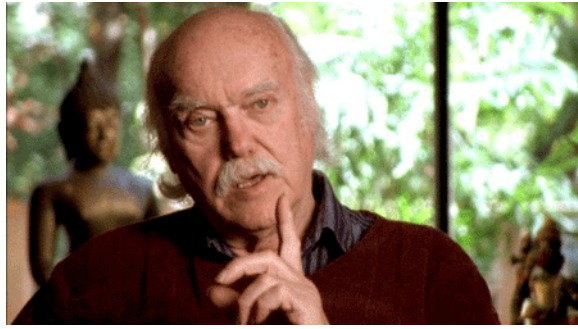
to be free.



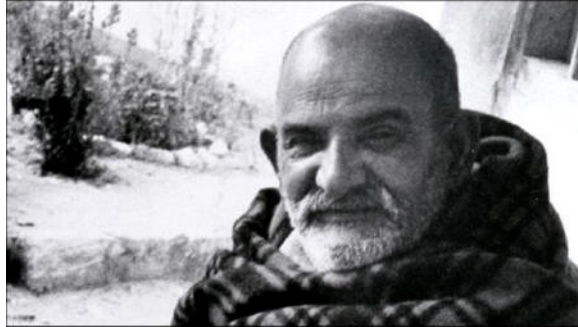
One day Maharaji indicated that he would like to try LSD. And I didn't know that that was wise, because he was old, and I had strong pills. But then he knew everything.



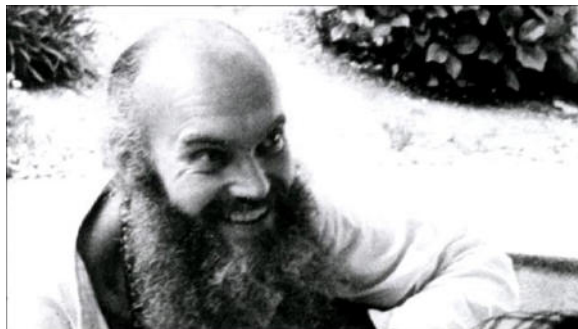
So I got pills I had in my bag, and he selected the pills,



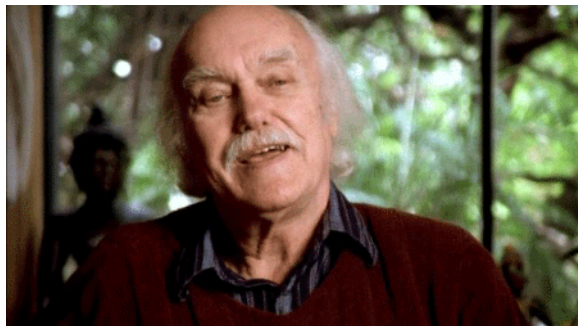
and one pill would have been a dose for a person like me.



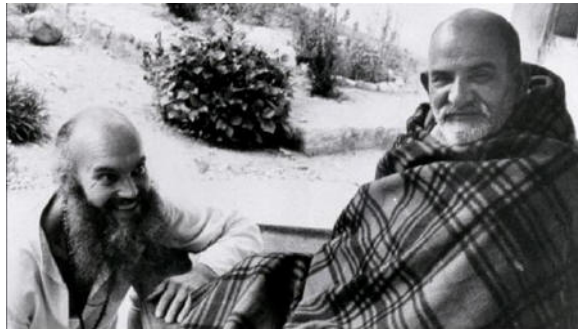
He took all the pills at once, and nothing happened. He didn't have any reaction.



I watched, I watched, and I watched. Nothing happened.



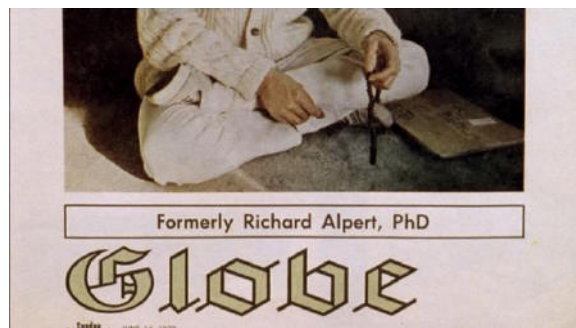
And what he was saying to me in his manner, as the mirror, he was saying, "It's in you. It's in you." The way we get caught in our method is, method drugs, method church, method, you know, method, method, method ... he got me out of my caughtness in my method.



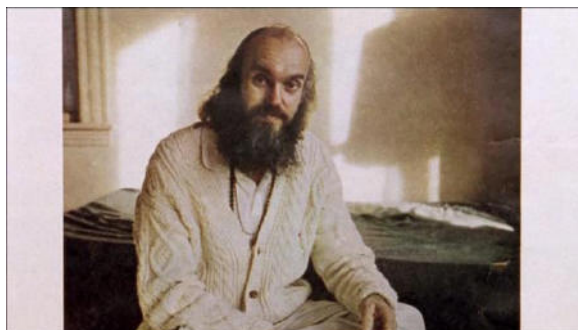
So I honored psychedelics, but I say there's other methods --



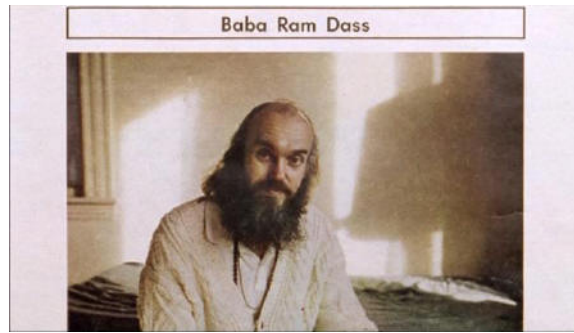
Maharaji gave me the name Ram Dass. Somebody told me that, and I said, "Is Good?"



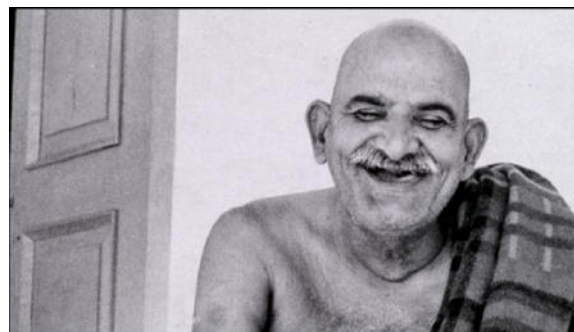
And they said, "Yeah. 'Ram' is 'God,' and 'Dass' is 'servant.'"



'Servant of God.'"



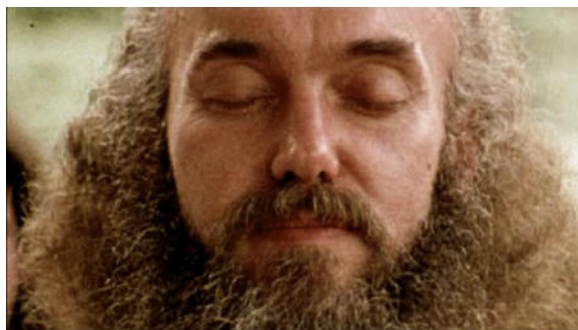
I waited until I was alone with Maharaji, and I said, "How do I get enlightened, Maharaji?" And he said, "Serve people and feed people." Here I'd come from America, and I was, you know,



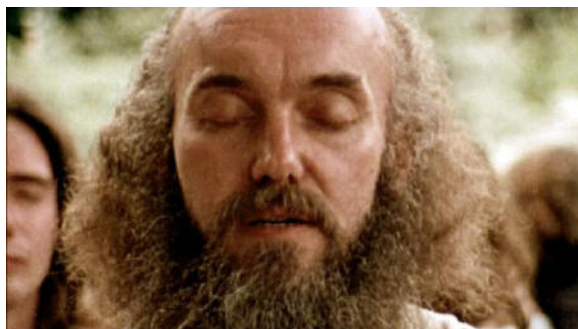
here was the guru: "Serve people, feed people."



[Richard Alpert, Older Brother] When Richard returned from India, he flew into Logan Field in Boston and my father went to pick him up. Now, keep in mind, my father had been president of the New Haven Railroad, and he was accustomed to wearing a Homburg hat and a Chesterfield coat, and very spiffy clothes and polished shoes. And he went up to the gate and he sees Richard coming off the plane with a sheet on, barefooted, and a big, long beard. And he said, "Oh my God." Then he jumped back into his car. And Richard finally made his way to the car. I think my father was probably confused for two weeks trying to figure out what had happened.



[George Alpert, Ram Dass' father] In our family life, we never had a situation where I said to any of my three boys, "You've got to do this," or "You've got to do that."



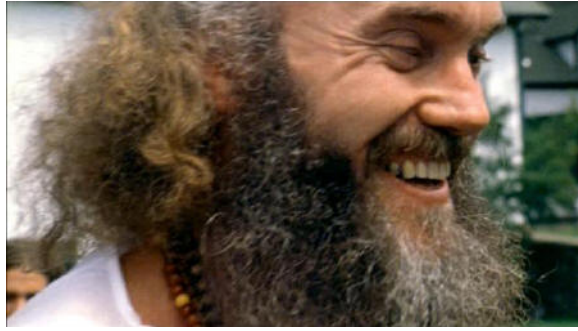
Richard -- who you call "Baba something or other" --



but he has a very definite mind of his own, and he makes his decisions on what he thinks is right and true.



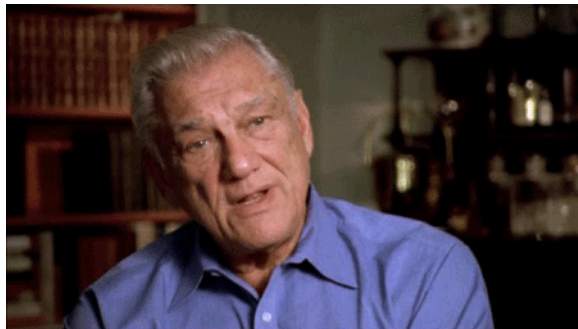
And I don't think he'd be influenced by anything that I say about his future any more than he's been influenced in the past. When he was a youngster, I had certain ideas as to what I thought I'd like to see him do. He didn't do them.



[Richard Alpert, Older Brother] When Richard came back from India, and he would come to visit us in Franklin, New Hampshire,



hundreds of hippies came to visit us.



If we'd go out to dinner, as you're driving I'd say, "Richard, what are all these people walking up the road to our place?" He'd say, "Well, those are some of the people that want to see me." And by the time we'd get back, there'd be maybe 2, 3, 400 people all over the place. And I said, "Richard, get them off the golf course."



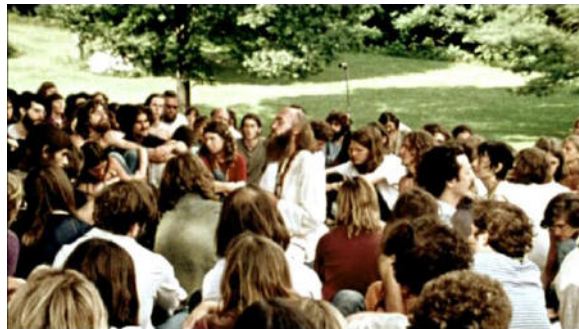
[Hippies Singing] Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare



Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare



[George Alpert, Ram Dass' father] Sounds like a fellow in the clothing business: Harry Krishna.



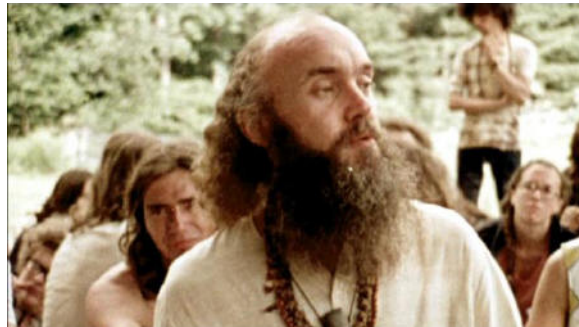
[Ram Dass] Every individual's karma is unique to that individual.



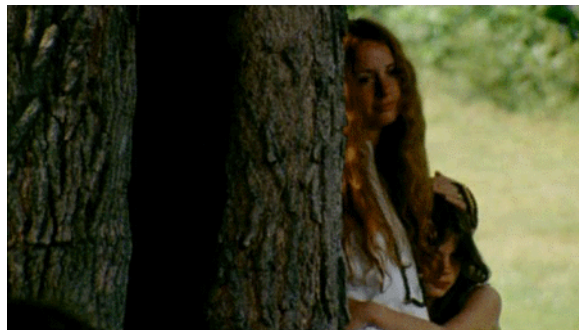
Your method, your upaya, must be found for your particular karma. You can't buy into someone else's trip.



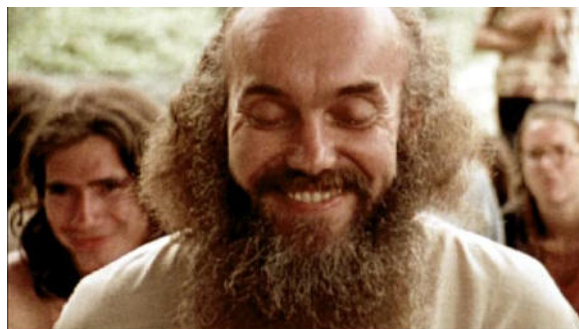
People come to me and say, 'I went with this swami, or this baba, or this school, or this discipline, and they were beautiful people, and I tried, and nothing happened.'



Am I wrong?' They say it didn't feel right. And I say, 'Always trust your inner voice.'



Come back into the sea of silence.



We'll now meditate for about seven minutes.



If you're not familiar with meditating, don't try to turn off any of the other sounds, let it all go by.



Just be here. Don't judge, don't try, don't stop, don't start, just be here.



It's all just enough.



[Krishna Das, Musician] I arrived at his father's place the first summer



in New Hampshire.



So I arrived there with my two dogs and my cat, and all my worldlies, right?



And the thing about meeting Ram Dass was that I knew that he knew. I knew that he knew what I wanted to know. And I had never met anybody who really knew what I wanted to know.



I knew that what it is I was looking for existed. It was real. It wasn't just some dream. I didn't know what it was.



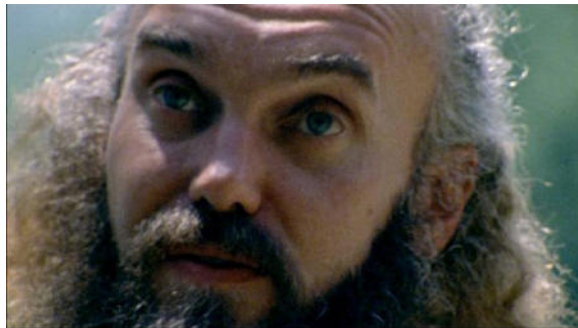
I didn't know if I was going to get a piece of it or not. But it was real.



It actually existed in the world. And that changed my life.



[Hippie] It feels really wonderful to be part of the continuing story. All around the country everyone's common. We're all together here, you know, no matter where we go.



It's just like being almost in the same place. Like Ram Dass says, "We're all here no matter where we are."



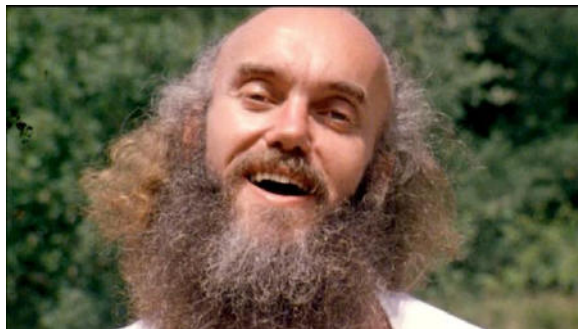
[Ram Dass] Exactly! Exactly! We're totally, totally interconnected. We're totally interconnected.



So that the minute you change your consciousness, the entire universe consciousness changes.



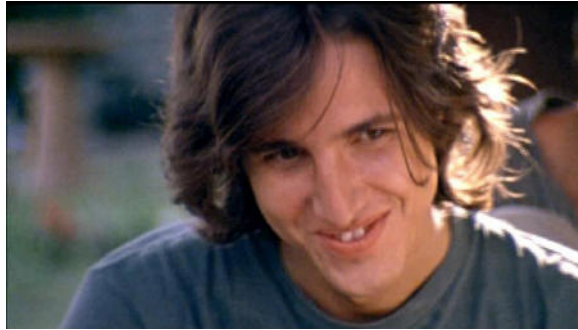
[Hippies singing] Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram



Oh, Jai Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram



Jai Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram





Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram



Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram





Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram



Oh, Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram



[Richard Alpert, Older Brother] The family felt that to some extent it was an invasion of our privacy.



On the other hand, we realized that Richard was doing a very good thing here. And my mother-in-law, for example, was absolutely in love with him. She'd say, "Whenever you have him over at your house, please let me be there. I just find it to be so peaceful to be with him."



[George Alpert, Ram Dass' Father] When I think of what he's doing, I think it's wonderful.



I look over the golf course, and hear all these people, some of them reading, some of them resting, some of them walking -- it's wonderful! And it makes Richard feel that he's making a contribution and therefore, in a small way, I'm making a contribution.



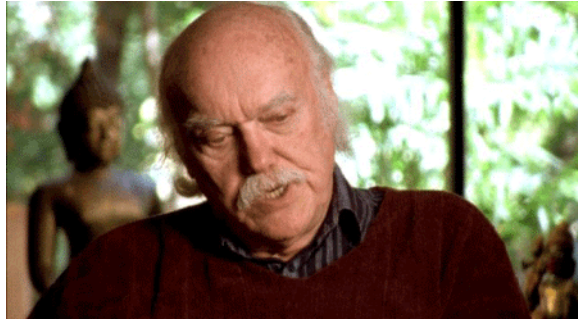
That's about the way I feel about it.



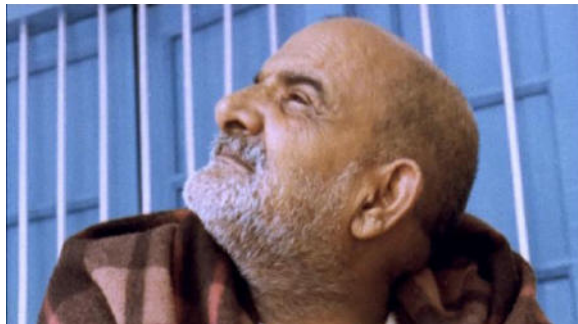
[Krishna Das, Musician] [All teary-eyed] He brought me to my guru,



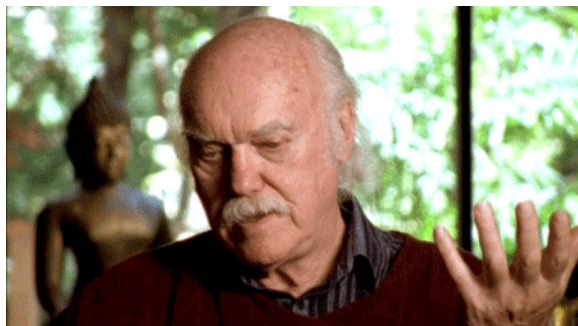
and that's -- and I first felt it in him in this life. In Ram Dass. I first felt it through him. And that's, you know, how can you ever repay that?



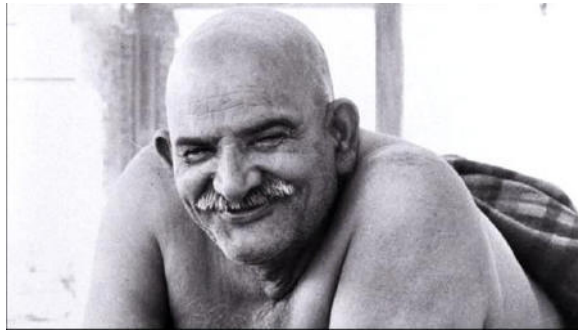
[Ram Dass] When Maharaji died, there were all the people crying, and I couldn't cry.



It was sad that I wouldn't see that body, but I didn't really think he had gone anywhere.



Even now when I call him, he's right here.



[Krishna Das, Musician] [All teary-eyed] We used to sing a lot with Maharaji. And he used to always ask us to sing so we would learn chants and sing with him.



Even when we weren't with him, we would sing.



It became a way of keeping a relationship with him.



[Hippies Singing] Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare



Hare Rama Hare Rama



Rama Rama Hare Hare



Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare



Hare Rama Hare Rama



Rama Rama Hare Hare



Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,



Krishna Krishna Hare Hare





Hare Rama Hare Rama



Rama Rama Hare Hare



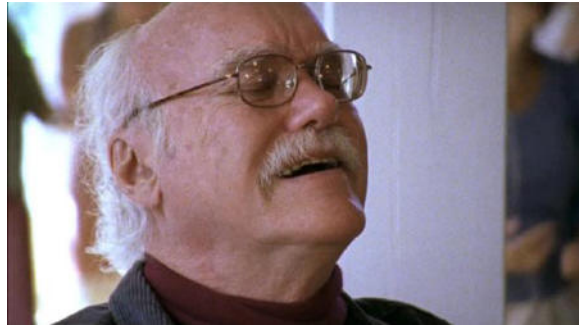
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare



Hare Rama Hare Rama



Rama Rama Hare Hare



Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare



Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare



Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare



Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare



Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare



Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare



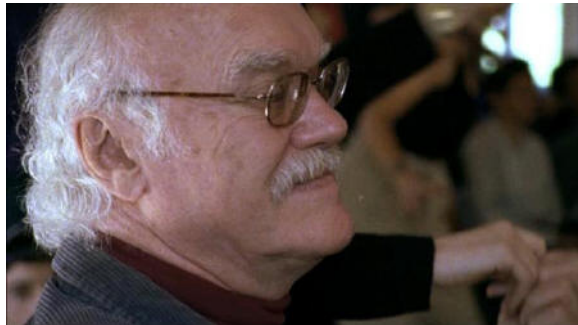
Hare Rama Hare Rama



Rama Rama Hare Hare



Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare



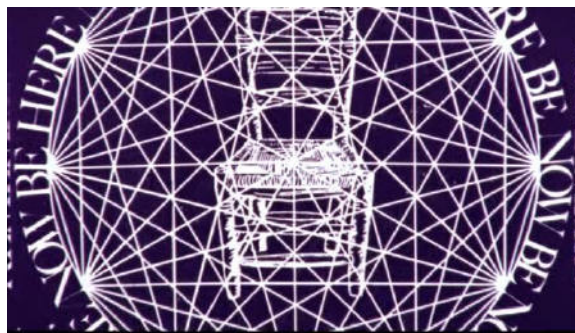
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare



Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

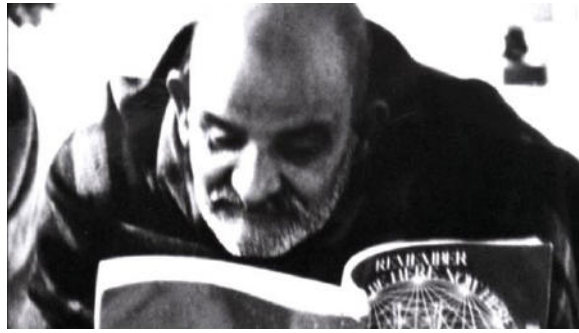


[Dr. Larry Brilliant, Co-Founder of the SEVA Foundation] You know, you can talk to, I don't know, a thousand people my age who went through the sixties, and you ask them "What was their first 'Ah hah'?" And for so many of them it was reading "Be Here Now."

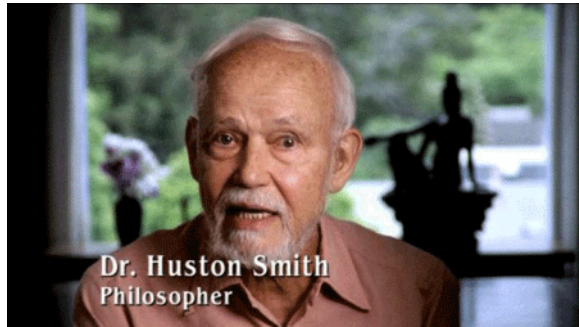


It was at one time the best-selling book in the English language, except for Ben Spock and the Bible.

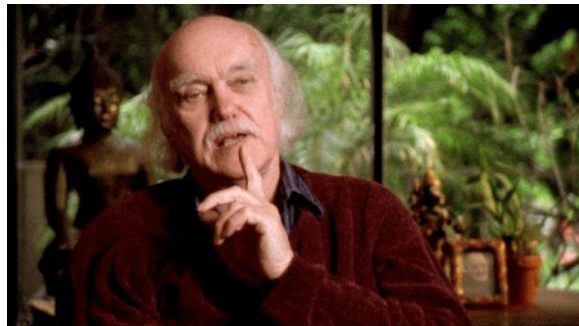




[Dr. Huston Smith, Philosopher] One of the virtues of the book is that it is not religion-specific in the sense of being tied to any historical religious tradition.



It just gets straight, goes straight for the pay dirt, and the essence and the heart that underlies them all.



[Ram Dass] I was in the Old City in Jerusalem, and I was walking across the square,



and two young Hassids were walking across. And one said, "Excuse me, you are Ram Dass." I said, "Yeah." He said, "You know, your 'Be Here Now' is what reason I'm a Hassid now."



[Rabbi Avraham Novick] I first came encounter with Ram Dass in high school in the 70s when somebody -- a friend -- gave me the book "Be Here Now,"



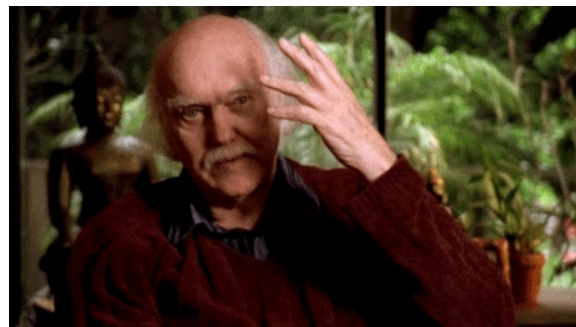
and thought I might find it interesting in light of some of the shared experiences we had had.

[Mickey Lemle] And what were those shared experiences?

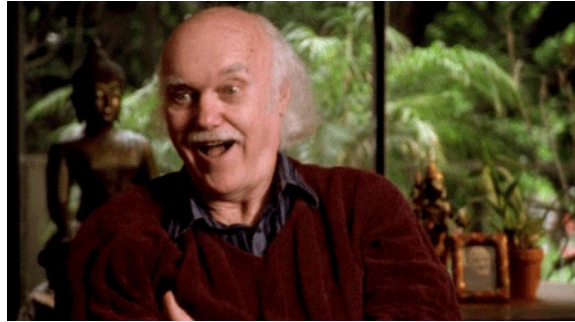
[Rabbi Avraham Novick] LSD experiences.



[Ram Dass] Once, in Thailand, I was in a Buddhist monastery,



and two Westerners in Buddhist outfit, and one of them says, "You know, 'Be Here Now,' it's why I'm a Buddhist monk."



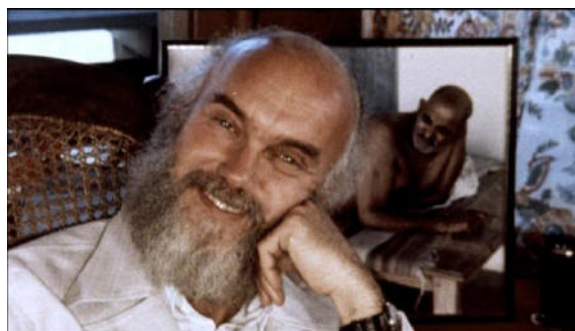
And, uh -- yeah.



[Dr. Larry Brilliant, Co-Founder of the SEVA Foundation] There was a time when so many Western seekers went to India in search of the truth.



Many experienced something which transformed them forever.



A few could come back and articulate that transformation. Ram Dass allowed us to go along on his ride. Even after his stroke, Wavy said to him, "Look, Dick, you always go ahead of the rest of us and bring back what you've learned."



Go back from this and tell us what we have to face as we get older and face the same kinds of problems."



When I was taking care of my father, he was slow, he was hesitant, he was deliberate.



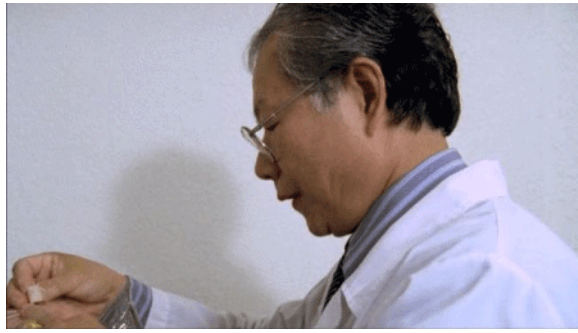
And I was wanting to go. Now, I'm my father, and I see what he saw.



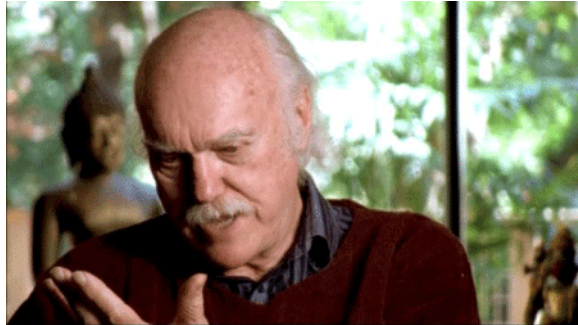
And so I identify with my father, and I identify with the caretakers who have to take care of me.



[Doctor] Does that feel okay?



[Ram Dass] Yeah. It's okay now.



The stroke is a fact. It is traumatic, like an earthquake. And there was another fact in my life: Maharaji's grace. Stroke, grace, stroke, grace, stroke, grace. This has been my major spiritual exercise during the stroke. Bringing these two things together.



[Doctor] Try this one.



Relax. Take a deep breath.



That feel okay now?



Take a deep breath. Okay, stand up.



Sit down. Slowly. Don't hold on to the chair. Yeah. This is good.



Try again. Slowly. Try walking.

[Ram Dass] Oh, now, this wasn't called for.

[Doctor] Left side first. That's okay. Yes. Good. Slowly, slowly. Yes. Okay. Yeah, yeah. Okay, turn. Slowly.

[Ram Dass] You're sure you think I could do this?

[Doctor] Yeah.

[Ram Dass] He's a doctor. He should know.



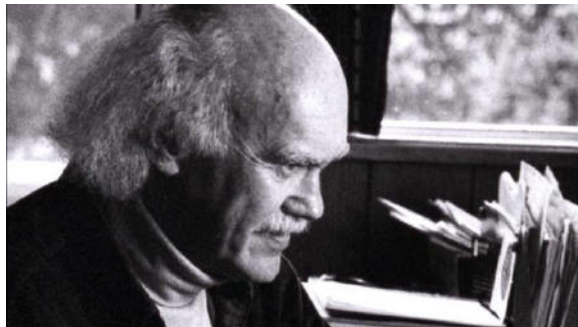
I'm living my life as an example to help others age and not be frightened and freaked by the chances of age.



I didn't expect that.



When I conceived of this book on aging,



there were some things that I had fear about.

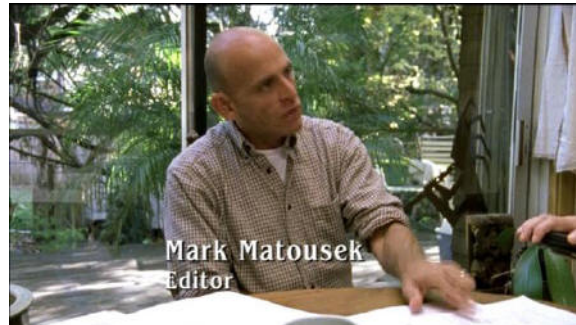


[Mark Matousek, Editor] Or we could just go to this.

[Ram Dass] But I've experienced the worst of them. Now I'm seasoned by the stroke.



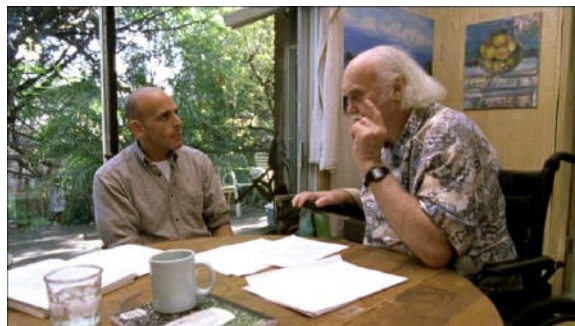
[Mark Matousek, Editor] And we're also, it's very balanced, Ram Dass,



because you're saying there was a physical reason, there were psychological reasons,



and the spiritual reason, which you interpret as having been given a stroke, and being held down.



[Ram Dass] Being stroked.

[Mark Matousek, Editor] Being stroked, yeah.

[Ram Dass] That's being stroked is very crucial because -- that phrase.

[Mark Matousek, Editor] Yes. Yes. Yeah, I think that's good.



[Ram Dass] Yep. Okay.

[Mark Matousek, Editor] "Physically this happened because of a blood clot, and I'm a happy accident of nature, but spiritually it was fierce grace." Shall we just say "my guru had stroked me under his blanket?"

[Ram Dass] No, no. That's mixture of metaphors.

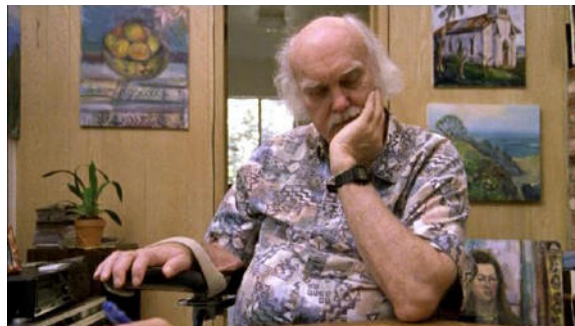
[Mark Matousek, Editor] Alright. "My guru under whose grace I am."

[Ram Dass] No.

[Mark Matousek, Editor] "Was stroking me?" Should we say that?



[Ram Dass] Had stroked me. Had stroked me.



[Mark Matousek, Editor] Right, right, right. Uh hum, that's nice.



"Healing is not after all the same as curing."

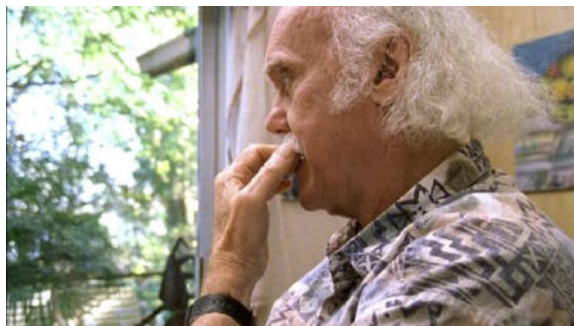
[Ram Dass] No.



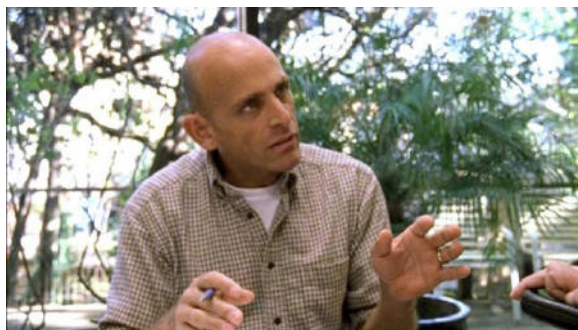
[Mark Matousek, Editor] "Healing does not mean going back to the way things were before but rather of allowing what is now to move us closer to God."



[Ram Dass] Yes. Okay.

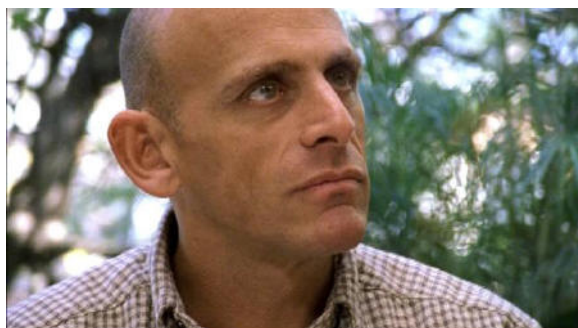


[Mark Matousek, Editor] Well, that's basically it.



You finally found the end of the book. That's the point.

[Ram Dass] Yep.



[Mark Matousek, Editor] "I'm finally learning to Be Here Now."

[Ram Dass] Okay.



[Mark Matousek, Editor] Is that okay?



[Ram Dass] [Laughing] Oh, Jesus. You're a schmaltz, New York schmaltz.



[Mark Matousek, Editor] Yeah, it's a little schmaltzy. It's too schmaltzy. So let's just cut the ending there. Let's cut that then.

[Ram Dass] Let's leave it in.

[Mark Matousek, Editor] You want to?

[Ram Dass] Yep. We did it.

[Mark Matousek, Editor] We did it! We did that.



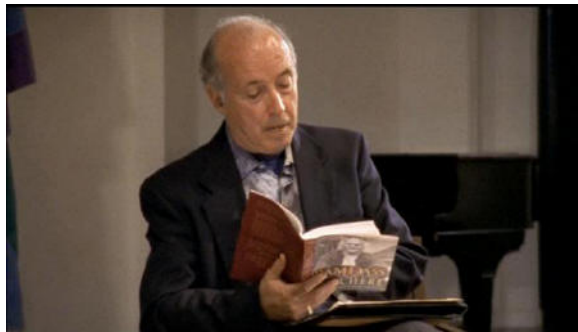
[Audience] [Cheering, whistling]



[Publication Date of STILL HERE, May 22, 2000]



[Man] [reading] "I've been leading the way into an experience that lies ahead for most of us: the experience of aging."



Having the point of view of a disabled person, having come through a catastrophic physical event,



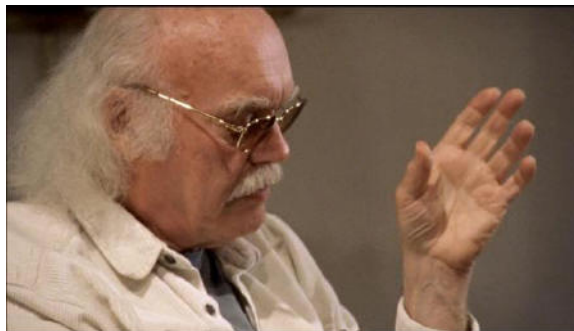
I can write about aging in a way I couldn't have before."



I'd like to begin by asking Ram Dass, You had this tremendous whack at your ego and your body.



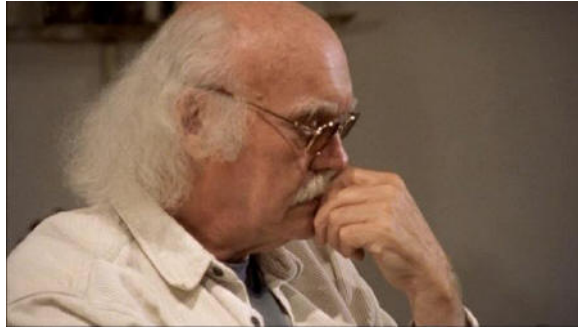
Um, the soul, I believe, was not diminished. Because when I read the book, I say, "Yeah, Ram Dass. You came through this. You have more to teach than ever." But this doesn't seem always to be the case.



[Ram Dass] There was a time when I bought everybody else's mind.



[Man] Uh hum. "Poor Ram Dass."



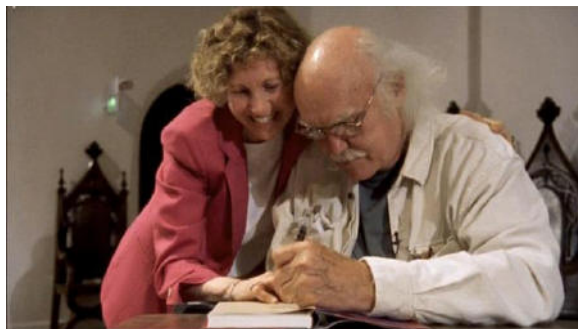
[Ram Dass] "Poor Ram Dass" -- yeah. And I said, "Poor Ram Dass." And I felt this was a terrible, terrible thing. And it was unexpected, and stuff like that.



The stroke caused me to lose faith. And it was a cold, cold place.



And I suddenly realized it was fierce grace. "Fierce grace" is what I called it, because it was one grace that turned my life around.



[Jyl] My name is J-Y-L. Jyl. It's spelled in an unusual way. Thank you, Ram Dass.



[Ram Dass] Good evening.

[Woman] Thank you for being such an inspiring teacher.

[Ram Dass] Great!

[Woman] Yeah. I work with people who are dying. I continue to learn a lot.

[Ram Dass] Yeah, that's a great, great sadhana.

[Woman] It's great. Yeah.



[Woman] Thanks, my love.



[Ram Dass] I've forgotten my own name, too.

[Man] Thanks so much.





[Woman] That's pretty good for your left hand.



[Ram Dass] I always had that.

[Woman] Oh. Good. Aren't you lucky? That's crazy. Thank you.



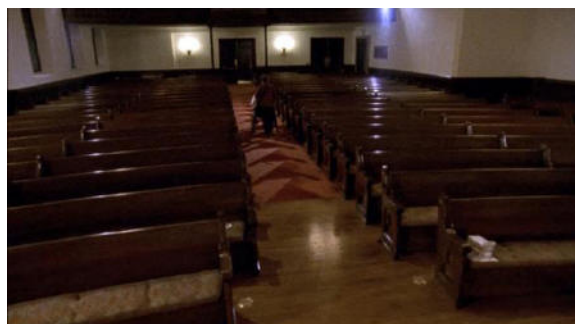
[Woman] Every time I've seen you, ever since the beginning, you're like a [inaudible] along the way.



[Ram Dass] It's been an interesting trip. For you?

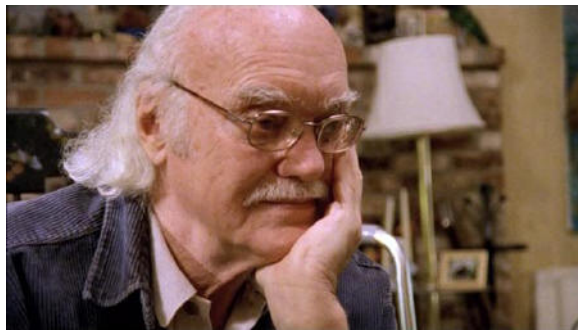
[Woman] [Nods head]

[Ram Dass] Yeah.





[Abby] When I was 15, I met Ram Dass, or 16, at a camp called "Creating Our Future." "Creating Our Future" was a youth organization teaching environmental and social justice organizing. I met him again a couple of months ago after the murders of my boyfriend and two of his co-workers. They were environmental and indigenous rights activists who worked with a tribe in northeastern Columbia fighting two U.S. based oil companies. I'm just returning from the burial. We buried Terrence on his birthday, which was a few days ago, in New Mexico. And I'm struggling with ... I'm struggling with the body and figuring out where he is in relation to that body.



He came to us in four layers of plastic and a box.



And the night before the burial we had, his three best friends had removed that plastic, and cleaned the body,



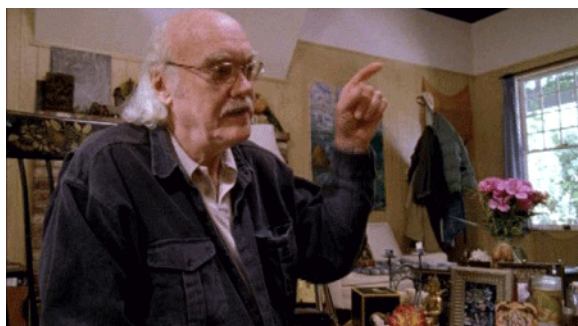
and wrapped it in sage and red clean cotton cloth. And five women: one from his childhood, one from his immediate past, me from the present, a co-worker from the future and my mother sang a little bit in the distance during that process.



And there was an acute release then. Not relief, but release. Ability finally felt like for Terry to breathe into those wounds: the ten bullets, and the anguish of that week. And he was lowered without the box into the earth.



[Ram Dass] Now, characterize him in your mind.

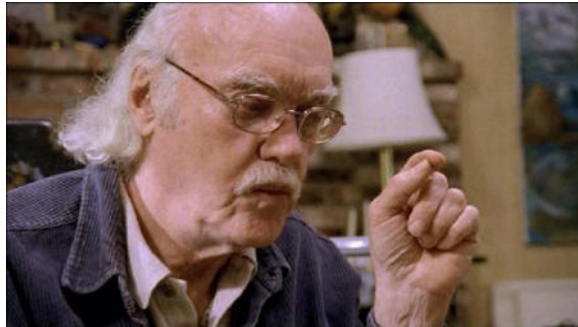


He's not that body. You put that body to rest.





You, as a soul, took this incarnation in which you were involved in this melodrama.



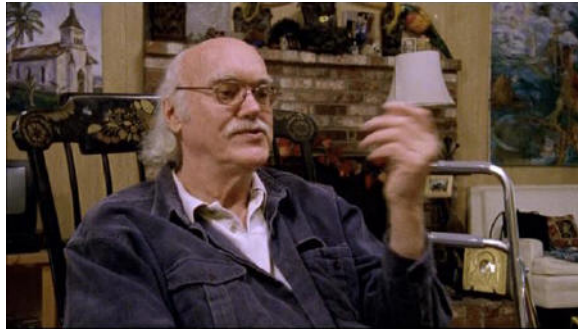
And the melodrama is sticky.



[Abby] Why is that happening to me? Because I want that to happen? I don't feel like it's --



[Ram Dass] Your ego doesn't, but God does.



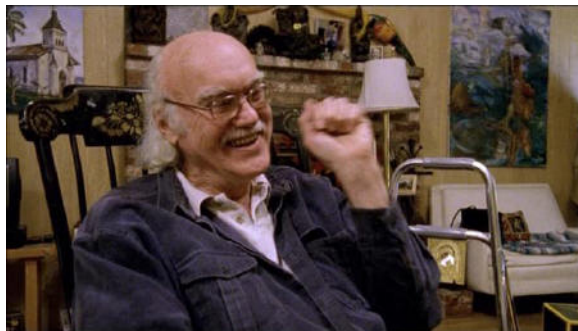
[Abby] Does God want that to happen to everybody?

[Ram Dass] No. No. No.

[Abby] So, should I be paying special attention to that?



That's this crossroads thing of like okay, like the knock came a long time ago. The knock came again when Terrence came into my life, when I was pretty asleep. I hustled to respond to that knock with Terrence. And then [slaps her hands violently together]



[Ram Dass] Knock, knock! [Laughing]

[Abby] He's gone.

[Ram Dass] [Making knocking movements with hand] Knock, knock, knock, knock.



[Abby] Yeah, but what -- it wouldn't have taken that! It wouldn't have taken violent ...

[Ram Dass] How do you know?



[Abby] Because we were going there anyway. That was already our work.

[Ram Dass] Uh huh.

[Abby] That was already how we were building our lives, and building the way that we related to each other.



[Ram Dass] You see how sticky the stuff you were working with? Here's the sticky.

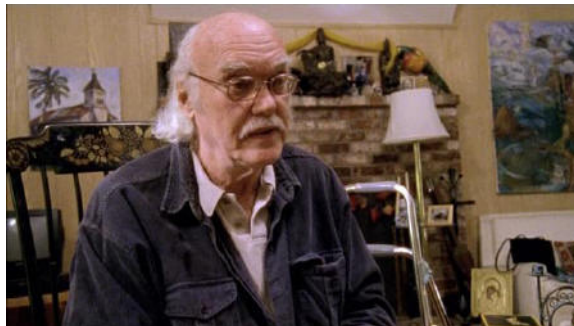


[Abby] Well, "Here's the sticky" is that I'm doing it by myself. And that wasn't the plan.

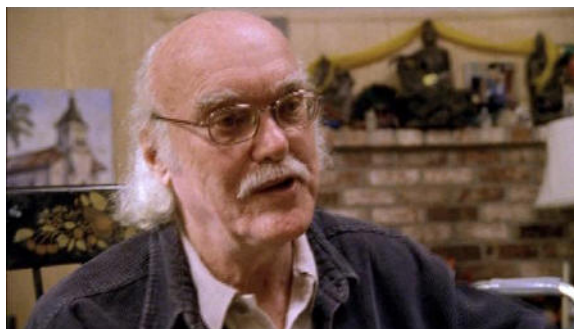
[Ram Dass] Well, your plan is your plan. I'm not a plan God.



[Abby] [Crying]



[Ram Dass] The stroke, it's upset all my plans. I had a radio show on the drawing boards.



But I don't say, "Look, God, you've got a helluva nerve, my plan ..."



[Abby] In April, a month or so after the murders, I woke up one morning to a dream after a dream. Finally, he had come. We're having, finally, our first talk after it happened. "Oh my God, where have you been? Where are you? What the hell am I supposed to do now?" Finally, that interaction.

[Ram Dass] Good, good.



[Abby] It was good. He had me, he could embrace me, hands all the way around both sides. And I was kissing his temples. He had freckles. The last question I asked him was one that had been scaring me, if I would find someone again here to love, to manifest what we were incubating. He said, "Abby, this was small peanuts." He said, "And when you find that love, I'm part of it."



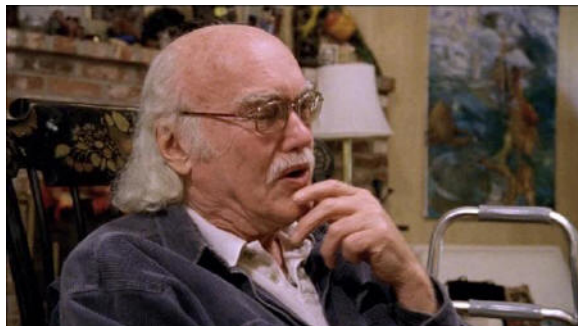
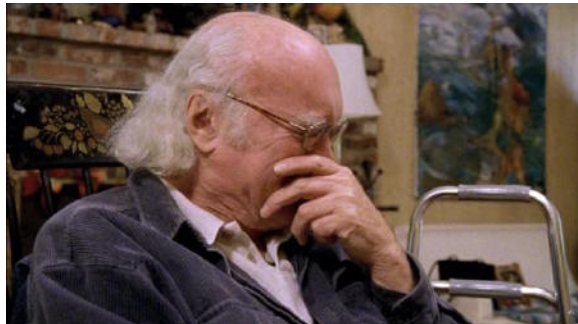
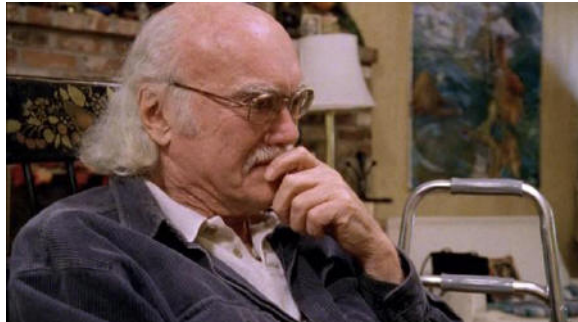
Oh, God! Yummy, yum, yum, yum. Oooh.



[Ram Dass Crying]



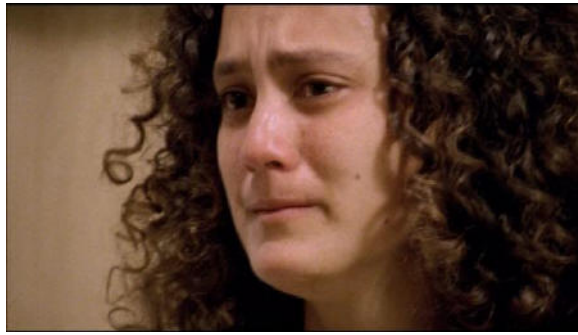
[Ram Dass Sobbing]



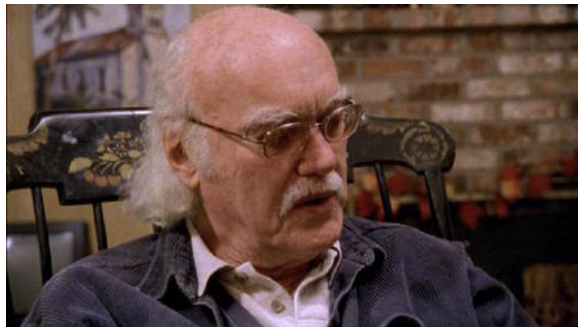
Ahhh!



Ohh!



Boy, that's strong.



Ohh!



[Abby] Yeah!



[Ram Dass] And you had that relationship. You know how few ever have a relationship like the one you and --
?

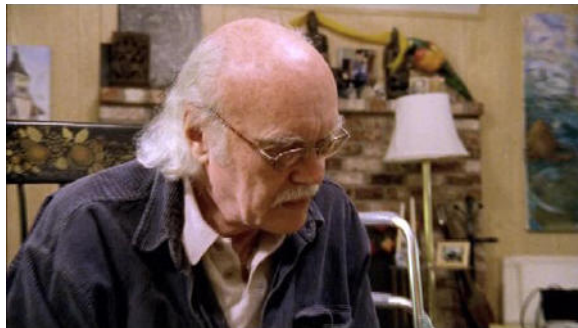


[Abby] [Sobbing]

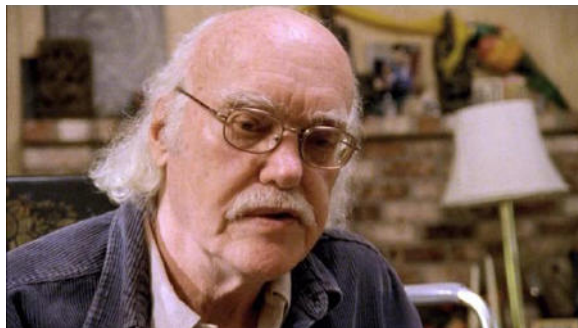


[Ram Dass] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

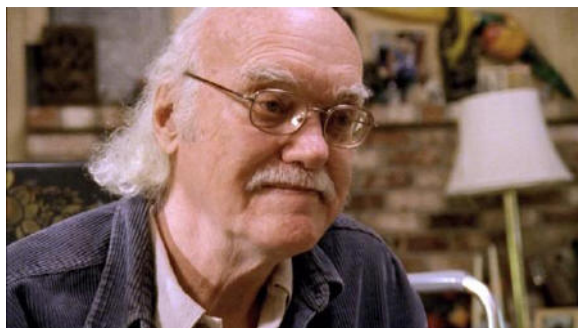




My guru said, "Suffering brings me so close to God." When a girl came before him, and she was so sad,



and she said, "Oh Maharaji, my life is so full of suffering." And he says, "Mine is too."



But he seemed happy about it, because he understood what this plane, what kind of work this plane does.



And you have an intuitive understanding of your path. That's what your soul has.



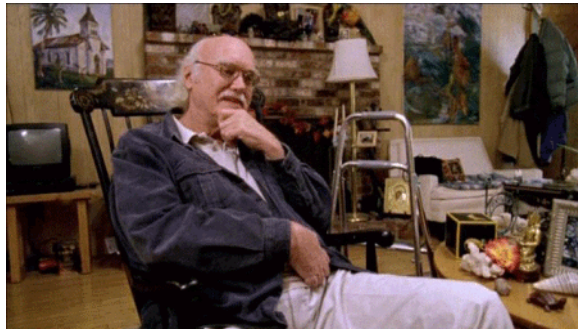
The death of a lover is a path.



You know?



[Abby] Yeah. Thanks.



[Ram Dass] Thanks. Yeah, yeah. Ohhh!



[Abby] You don't have to get up. You don't have to get up.

[Ram Dass] I have to get up sooner or later!

[Abby] [Laughs]



[Ram Dass] Good.

[Abby] I don't know where you're going to go.

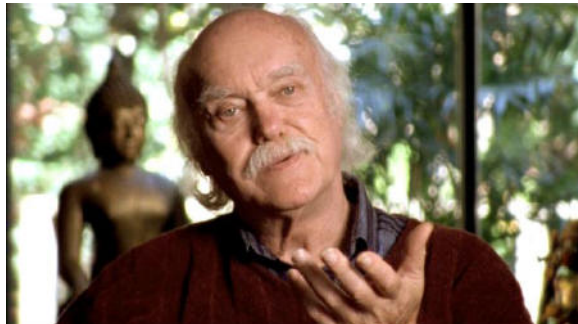
[Ram Dass] I don't know where I'm going to go, either.

[Abby] You're going to give me a hug.

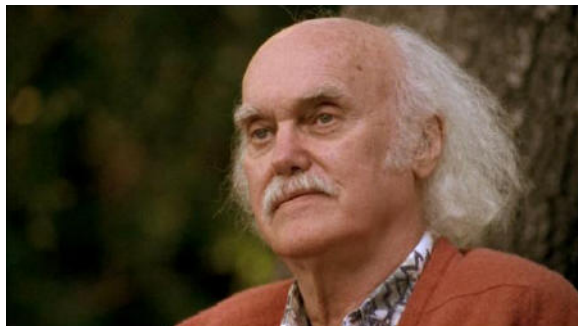


[Ram Dass] Oh, is that what I'm going to do?

[Abby] Uh huh.



[Ram Dass] I was galumphing through life before the stroke, and I kind of thought, "That was that. That was all it was." But the stroke, it's like a whole new incarnation.



There are qualities in me that never would have come out. Never.



I'm at peace more now than I have ever been.



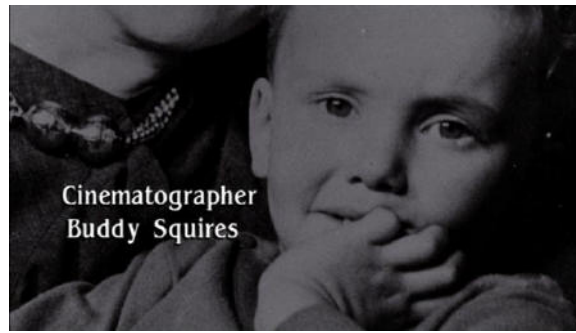
The peace comes from my settling in to the moment. This moment is alright. Now, this moment is alright.



RAM DASS
FIERCE GRACE



Produced and Directed by
Mickey Lemle



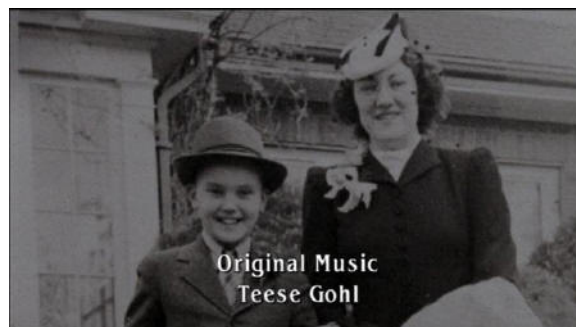
Cinematographer
Buddy Squires



Associate Producer
Linda K. Moroney



Editors
Aaron Vega
Mickey Lemle
Jacob Craycroft



Original Music
Teese Gohl

Original Music
Teese Gohl



Co-Producers
Jessica Brackman
Buddy Squires

Sound Recordists
Peter Bettendorf
John Zecca
P.D. Valson
Michael Becker



Assistant Camera
John Chater
Jill Tufts
Deshraj
Ulli Bonnekamp

Production Manager (India)
Nihal Mathur

Sound Editor
Jacob Ribicoff



Planet 10 Post

Re-Recording Mixer
Cominick Tavella
Sound One Corp. NY

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John Chater
Pramod Mathur

Additional Editing
Linnea Hamilton



Assistant Sound Editor
Mike Poppelton

Rights Clearance
Elizabeth Klinck

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Mac Smith

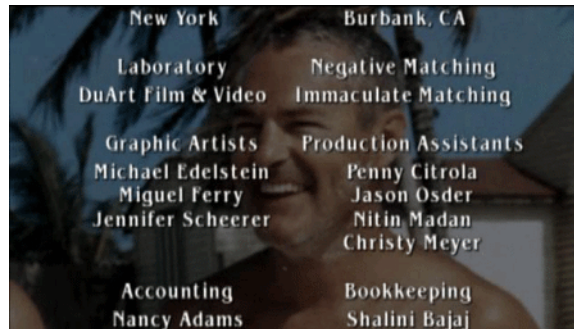
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Aaron Lemle

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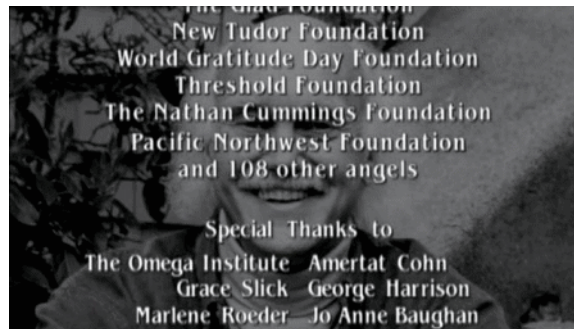


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Grace Slick
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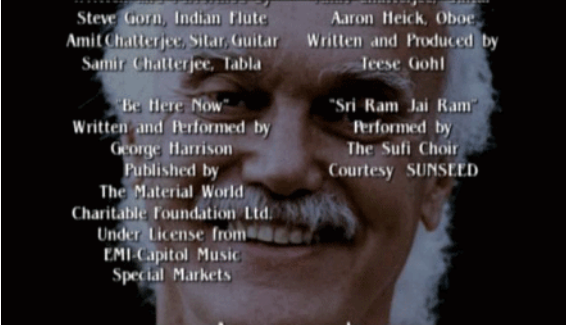
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 First Unitarian Universalist Church, SF
 Neem Karoli Baba Ashram & Hanuman Temple
 (Taos, NM and Kainchi, India)



Steve Gorn, Indian Flute
Samir Chatterjee, Tabla
Based on themes by
Krishna Das
Amit Chatterjee, Guitar
"Somebody Training"
"Millbrook"
Written and arranged by
Teese Gohl
Dave Ratajczak, Drums
Dave Phillips, Bass
Peter Calo, Guitar
Aaron Heick, Saxophone
and Clarinet
"Intro to India"
and "Meeting Maharaj ji"
"White Rabbit"
By Grace Slick
Irving Music, Inc. - BMI
Performed by
The Hampton String Quartet
Arranged by Doug Nordli
"There We Are"
"Ram Dass's Theme"
Based on themes by
Krishna Das

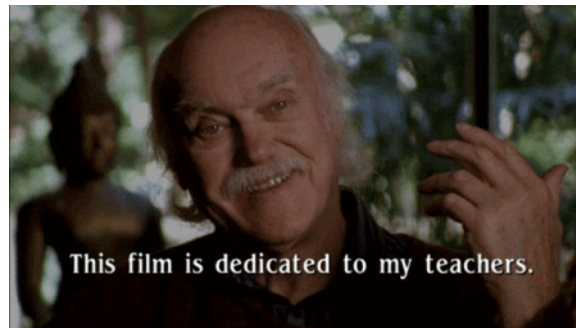


Steve Gorn, Indian Flute
Amit Chatterjee, Sitar, Guitar
Samir Chatterjee, Tabla
Aaron Heick, Oboe
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"Sri Ram Jai Ram"
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Shana Roth Caryl Circus
Steve & Anita Isser William Alpert
Dr. Ralph Metzner Dr. Huston Smith
Rosemary Woodruff Leary Bhagavan Das
Carolyn Ruth Chan Lynne Oberlander
Krishna Das K.K. Sah
Dr. Ming Qing Chu Mark Matousek
Robert McDermott Abby Reyes

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Carolyn Ruth Chan
Lynne Oberlander
Krishna Das
K.K. Sah
Dr. Ming Qing Chu
Mark Matousek
Robert McDermott
Abby Reyes



This film is dedicated to my teachers.



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