

The Highest Pass: Moving Beyond Addiction

Recovery 2.0 Interviews Anand Mehotra

Tommy: Welcome to the Recovery 2.0 Beyond Addiction Conference. I'm your host Tommy Rosen and I'm just thrilled to be speaking with Anand Mehrotra. Anan grew up in Rishikesh, India, the birth place of yoga. He is the founder and master teacher of Sattva Yoga, a holistic ever evolving practice that combines Asana, Praniyama, meditation, Kriya and wisdom. Sattva yoga inspires students to experience freedom, radical aliveness and their most authentic selves on every level. Anand currently teaches around the world, giving wisdom talks, authoring sat songs and meditations, leading Sattva yoga journeys and guiding students through profound transformations in wisdom, retreats and trainings. He is featured in the award winning documentary, the Highest Pass, that recently released online course, Himalayan Wisdom for Life Beyond Fear and the first book in his series on freedom, The Free Life will be due out soon. Anand has also created the Sattva center, a retreat and wellness center in his hometown, Rishikesh where he leads Sattva yoga teacher trainings and wisdom emergence. He's the founder of the Khushi foundation which provides medical, educational and spiritual support to the children of Rishikesh and the Sattva foundation which benefits the elderly. Anand, thank you so much for lending your spirit and voice to Recovery 2.0. Welcome.

Anand: Thank you so much, Tommy. It's such an honor to be here with you.

Tommy: So Anand, you are a teacher and we are going to talk a little bit about addiction and recovery here. And as I thought about communicating with you today, it dawns on me that on some level, all human beings struggle with addiction at some level, this sense of lack, this sense of disconnection. Would you agree with that?

Anand: Definitely. Absolutely. See, actually last night only, I had a talk. I was talking about that human in this day and age, human intelligence is in service of human neurosis. So we singled out, when we talk about addiction globally, we have singled out substance addiction. But that's something later expression of addiction. If we are really talking about addiction, we have to really look at the core and talk about addiction as a whole which is not just about substance. It is addiction to part, addiction to violence, addiction to greed, addiction to the deep existential burdens, a state of living from a distance. So in part, we really bring all of it in to the light.

Tommy: Thank you. And so from that perspective, it seems like if we're talking to any human being, if you wanted to talk to anybody about addiction, the teachings, your method of teaching would not vary from one human being to another. You would simply teach what you teach.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: Beautiful. So the reason I say this is there's a tendency in 12-step programs in particular to separate people into different categories. One category are people who are the addicts and another category are people who are not. And I think when we start talking about spiritual teachings, there really is no difference. So what I want to talk to you about is your teaching because your teaching will naturally apply to everybody whether they fall in this category of people who have struggled with an addiction of any kind or not. So can you tell me a little bit about what you teach, how you teach, what do you hope for for people?

Anand: You see my invitation, I'd rather call it an invitation you know because teaching still has a distinction between the teacher and the receiver. But actually, the only teacher is the self. So the teacher in front of you in human form, it's just an invitation for us to access the self guru, the great master within. And that's really the vision of my teachings, of my deep sincere longing on my heart service to really see people come to their authentic self because we've made contact with that self of ours which is really profoundly exist in connection and love, we are disconnected and in ego which will express in some form of disease sooner or later. So after all that's said, there are only two kinds of non-violent people in this world, people who have not yet been pushed by circumstances enough or people who are consciously irrespective of their circumstances are really consciously evolving and have a spiritual practice. Without the practice, without our consciously coming to deeper sense of self, beyond our ego, personality and living a life of causation as a cause of our story, we can only hope for peace but never experience it. But that's really some of the teachings that we offer really is holistic practice where we have to really access the whole level of our existence from the level of our belief system, from how we are deeply conditioned by society, by culture, by karma on how to undo the conditioning and also on the level of physical body working with Kriya, meditations to raise our vitality because there's an energetic reality to addiction to part and to substance, to any form of addiction as energetic reality to it. So we have to change energetic patterns. We can't just talk about it. Just talking wouldn't do it. Of course, you can't change your past but you have there's an energetic reality which has to alter. So the reason why we have addicted all the times to anything is because we are not experiencing the height of life. We are naturally drawn to be high. We are naturally born to be in ecstasy and to experience that joy of existence and then there's a disconnect, the profound disconnect in the core that joy is not to be experienced and then we are looking for things that are these relationships, sex, or substance or money, whatever it may be to fill that, to create that connection. But it never succeeds. So there has to be a radical awakening. That's the invitation really, a radical realization that the only way for us to be free and to be at peace is by working with our own energies, our own consciousness in collaboration with the existential love. So that's the meaning of the invitation. Of course, there are meditations and Kriya and wisdom and contemplative practices and so forth. Yeah.

Tommy: Thank you so much. Let's breakdown some of our perspectives on addiction for people who are watching this. In my opinion, addictive behavior begins first in the mind.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: And so the mind is going to be the transformation that we speak of if we're going to move from addiction to recovery or darkness in to light, somehow we're going to have to deal with this beast of the mind.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: What is the pathway to move to this self realization of the guru within us as you put it? How do we get to that when the mind is so powerfully in our way?

Anand: The first practice really which is the foundation of practice is the practice of silence, you see. We start to meet ourselves before the mind; otherwise, we are constantly meeting ourselves after the mind. And then what we call our mind, Tommy, is not even our mind. It's just an entity. It is not our own. It's like saying it's my hand but this hand is constantly slapping me in the face. It's not my hand. It belongs to an entity. So when we're talking about the mind which is constantly showing up with an obstacle doesn't belong to the self. It's a mind which is shared by collective unconscious. It had its own tendency. It had its own violence, creating an aversion, creating an aversion. It's constantly works in duality. So beginning of a practice on coming to wholeness, you know, because it's really coming to your wholeness because that's the invitation. So the beginning of it is really to have a meeting with ourselves before the mind to come to really the source of part, the pure field of awareness. And it can really begin with simple practice on meditation twice a day. You have morning practice, 30 minutes, evening practice, 30 minutes. Twice a day regular. It should be as important than—more important than anything else we do in our life. We take a shower, we brush our teeth, we get dressed, but we don't do anything for our brain, for our mind. We take it for granted. What we don't realize is it's the root of our tree. And the most important thing we can do for healing our mind is meditation, sincere meditation practice irrespective of who we are and where we are. As human beings, I think it's not only for ourselves. It's our responsibility for our [plant] to really meditate, to come to our peace, to come to our silence, then we can really begin to access the pure field of awareness then we can feel a distinction between self and [part]. Otherwise, we have no point of reference. We can't create distinctions. The moment [part] is there, identify with the part to be happy about consistent practice then in time, you see, it takes a little time, you can really then love that capacity in you where you can distinguish part as one's self. You can say, "Oh there is the part. There is the mind." It will being to peak and disappear. It will begin to peak and disappear and then you somehow all of a sudden have more power to choose. Otherwise, you think you have choice but you don't because all we know ourselves is as mind and when we're talking about mind, we aren't just talking about thought. We're talking about emotions. We're talking about feelings. We are talking about subconscious and

unconscious tendency. We're talking about the whole complex, not just the conscious part. We're talking about the whole complex. Because when we are living in our mind, identified as one. Thought, emotion, feeling, they are not separate from each other [Audio glitch]. So when you are feeling angry, you're not [audio glitch]. You're angry in your mind. You're angry in the physical level. Your energy is moving in anger and your feeling is also anger identified. So the practice of meditation, of coming to ourselves, regularly twice a day is crucial in our wholeness.

Tommy: Yes and since this is I mean your own words a responsibility, so responsibility for people to the planet to meditate, can you give just a form to people for a very simple how they could begin, even they can watch this and they could actually start to begin to meditate somehow?

Anand: When we are talking about meditation, we have to realize meditation is something that happens to you so you are creating an environment where it can just happen to you. So we're working on dropping the resistance, the static and white noise on the level of energy and energy. So the simplest fact of this [case], you take the tip of the tongue and roll it back and forth creating an emptiness in the mouth. Roll your eyes both of them deeply at your paradise center which is your [0:12:03] and pituitary gland, your pre-frontal cortex, the seat of intelligence in the human brain, and just start to follow the breath, deep breath, inhaling. As you inhale, we mentally chant so, long so and as you exhale, mentally chant hum. Inhaling so, exhaling hum, meaning I am that I am. And just meaning that this practice, even if it's just training 30 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes in the evening, you do this practice and then at the end when you're about to come out of meditation, after a while you will feel that the sound, the mantra will cancel all the parts. The mantra and your attention coming back to the present can cancel all the fragmentation. And at the end before we get up, we must introduce our intention, really our commitment to our wholeness because the tendency of the mind will again show up. So what can happen when at the end of your meditation? You have a deeper access to consciousness and then you introduce your intention, your commitment or your prayer at that level. It is below the mind. It's from the level of awareness, not on the level of [part]. Then we introduce our prayer, our intention on that level, it has a much deeper impact on ourselves. So it begins here and then of course you know there are other techniques but we must begin here. This is the foundational practice which everybody can do. This being with the back spine should always be straight, not pressing against any wall or chair. You can sit on the chair. You can sit on the floor but the spine should be straight. If you're sitting on the chair, the feet should be firmly planted on the ground. And preferably if you can, one must cover ourselves with the silk cloth or wool from calm to the whole body, just covering ourselves because to keep the energy that is within so it will alter the life for magnetic base which are around you especially these days that we're living in, this times, you can disturb your silence. So it's important to cover ourselves during the practice.

Tommy: Thank you so much. I'm thinking now there's something very interesting coming to my mind which is within 12 step programs, which are designed to help people establish a connection with the divine...

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: What we call higher power.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: People there—so the idea is how do we establish that connection, that higher connection. And I think a lot of people are outward oriented in terms of that connection that we want to reach outside of ourselves to this higher power to connect to the divine. That language that you're using on here you talk about connecting with the divine within.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: Is that correct?

Anand: Yes, you see divine within, only when we accept the divine within will we accept divine without. If we don't recognize the divine principle within us, we will only fantasize about the divine without. We won't really experience the divinity inside of us.

Tommy: So we're not disconnected from the divine ourselves. We're a piece of it.

Anand: Yes. We are never disconnected. You see, it is our illusion that we are disconnected. We don't have a choice whether to be divine or not. But we have a choice whether to accept it or not, and to our delusion, to our ignorance, we have our attention elsewhere. So we constantly feel that we have been abandoned by existence but we are here at this very moment. It's profoundly above all. It's existential love. This is the divine love. This is the sacred love which is profoundly liberating. See. And I also think you see in yoga, the Bhakti yoga, the yoga of Rasa, the yoga of devotion is a profoundly important because we are people of rituals. If we don't have healthy positive rituals in our life, we will take on negative rituals. We come back from work, what do we do? What is our ritual? Okay. Maybe switch on the television or we go to do something to get out of the stress. But I think we must also with our meditation, with our sacred practice, it's like ritual. It's not a mental thing. That's what you do when you come back home. That's what you do when you get up in the morning. You do your satna, you do your meditation. You build a nice altar, then you do your prayer. You feel that deep existential love affair because above all, this life is God. This body is God. This breath is God. Everything around us is that singularity. Whatever name you want to call it – God, consciousness, big bang – the truth is the singularity has become everything around us including this body. If that's not [demand], what is?

Tommy: Now, what happens when people sit down in meditation maybe for the first time and they're new with it? They feel a lot of pain in their body maybe or they feel a lot of struggle in their mind and they think to themselves, this is very difficult. This is not a pleasant experience and it leads them to believe that it's not going to ever be pleasant. What can we say to these people?

Anand: You see, we have to realize that just because if you are looking inside the room and you see all of a sudden that the room is in disorder does not mean that the room are in disorder just now.

Tommy: Yes.

Anand: All this time you were looking outside the window. And so that's very important to realize in the process of meditation that when you release, you turn the light on inside, all of a sudden your awareness should become more aware. It's not that there is more chaos. It's that you're more aware of what is going on there. It's being highlighted so that it can be deleted. The light has to go on and in that light as it goes on, you see, "Oh my God, this is restless on the parts." You see all of that and that's very important. If you're experiencing that, then get excited you are on the right track. It's inevitable. It's inevitable that you will experience that and then the resistance will come. The resistance will come and you will finally escape it. But that's the key that we must continue, that continuity of our practice is liberation itself.

Tommy: Now there are a lot of people in addiction in recovery or in addiction who struggle in particular with shame and guilt. And they may be have done things that they haven't been able to forgive themselves for, they carry a lot of it in their body, in their mind and for these people in particular, they really struggle around the idea of sitting still. And the impulse to get away from those feelings is very profound for these people. Could you speak a little bit about shame and guilt from your perspective?

Anand: Yeah, I see the shame and guilt, these are found in 99% of human population, this profound [streak] of self hatred which is really the original sin. Original sin is not the apple. It is really the self hatred. It's unworthiness. It's disconnection where we misidentify who we are. We start to misidentify. We give up or divinity for a little time bomb entity. So it's very important to realize that all of these feelings have nothing to do with the true nature of self and the universe or the divine have no judgment. You see, there is no judgment. That's the unconditional love. I think that's something very important to realize as human beings that existence of divine the sacred, there's no judgment in that love. There is none. So the only person judging you is you and you have to have compassion there to yourself because evolution is full of mistakes, you. We must all be proud of the mistakes we make. And we're one because mistakes are inevitable, every human being, but there's no human being on this face of this planet who had not made a mistake. Period. From Mila Rigpa the great master and Tibet

[0:20:36] Mal who became Shanti Deva to the great Buddha himself, all the great masters, Mahatma Gandhi also, right. He struggled with something. So every human being on the face of this planet struggled, makes mistakes unconsciously, consciously but the deciding factor is the moment that you decide to take a responsibility for our healing, for our wholeness. And those feelings are shame and guilt we have to surrender them, realize that they are meaningless. They're just arriving from a big unconscious ignorant tendencies which is not personal to us. It is global. It is shared by the humanity and that's self-hatred or that shame. It's the shame of humanity. [0:21:24] [audio glitch].

Tommy: Yes. Now...

Anand: Also other aspect which are like bring that is the importance of kundalini and mantra, dynamic meditation techniques where you're moving with energy as you move back to Kriya and [what] we call mantra energy. It's easier to meditate. It's easier to be still also. So it's a great thing to bring in, to have the opportunity to practice some Kriya and working with sounds and image.

Tommy: Thank you. Anand, can you speak a little bit about your lineage, the lineage of your teachings and who your teacher was and so people have a little context. Many of the people who will watch this have never even been to a yoga class. They have no idea at all. So I want to try to explain to them where this wisdom is coming from.

Anand: Yes, once a part, you see, I would like to say that yoga, when we call yoga and we can call it by any other name is really is just the art of living intelligently, art of living whole. And you might never go to class but it is the art of living. That's what really the teachings are all about and that's what I when I was studying, it was not the asana that I learned about. That came at the last. First of all was the art of living, the knowledge of self, as to "who am I?" And my first teacher named me. He was from the Malilindi lineage of great tantric master. He travel all over the world. He was a great healer and worked with actually a lot of people and addiction also. He was a great healer and teacher and he was there when I was born in Rishikesh, the birthplace of Udana. And then at that time, I was born, it was just a polygamist center. That's what it was. So I grew up in Rishikesh studying with [0:23:27] and then I went to [0:23:29], a different master. One of my teachers also [0:23:40]. She's still in Bali. Also my teachers are disembodies now. But also then I have the rest of education. I studied philosophy and economics in New Delhi University and studied environmacy. And I'm always very interested in the new development in sciences and all the ongoing process, so the teachings, the lineage and [0:24:05] continues on into future.

Tommy: Anand, in your lifetime, have you had to face addiction in yourself personally?

Anand: You see, this life I think the environment which I am living one was very conducive to or very whole because with just the environment that I grew up in living in Rishikesh and that

pristine environment and from the very young age, the interaction that I had was with very whole beings also from the yoga lineage of Peshawar[sp?] and [biology?] so I had the privilege of studying with masters from that lineage. So from a very young age, I just got to experience these teachings. Also that made me realize that it's really often times the addictions or the tendency that we experience are really coming from the condition, coming from the environment which we are. So there is no reason to be ashamed of because it's really been something that happened because of the environment and the collective unconscious around.

Tommy: Yes. Thank you. That was not my experience in my life. My karma would have me born to a lot of confusion and a lot of pain and suffering around me and so it's interesting to see what my lessons were and I had to have these experiences and I'm glad that I survived them in this body so I can continue this work. But I look back to my mom, my poor mom, she's a wonderful woman. She's no longer with us but when she carried me, she was drinking very heavily alcohol and smoking about two or three packs of cigarettes a day. So I think when I was in the womb, I was already sort of being influenced with highs and lows and highs and lows and becoming sort of habituated to a life that include drugs and alcohol. Does that make sense to you?

Anand: Definitely. Definitely.

Tommy: An unborn fetus could be affected by the energetic frequency of the mother.

Anand: Sure. The mother, father, and just the location you're born in to, right, the environment, I mean the collective. What is the frequency there, you know. When a child is born, we are very sensitive. We are born as sponges really. We absorb our environment. It's not just what the [parents] are really saying to us and what the people are saying or taught in school. We are energy absorbers. Children, we cannot be lied to could be so perceptive and so sensitive we see beneath the surface. So we are absorbing everything a lot of times in our conscious but it's really shaping unconscious and subconscious tendencies.

Tommy: Oh yeah. You know, I talk and I write a lot about the idea that people who struggled with severe addiction like drug addiction or sex addiction or gambling or whatever it is that they're excellent story tellers.

Anand: Yeah.

Tommy: And they have built a story and they are protecting the story like at all cost. The story has to be true because if the story isn't true, they have to start to look beneath the surface. Can you speak a little bit about story and the things that we communicate to ourselves?

Anand: Oh yes, you see, I think there are two kinds of stories I say. The two kinds of stories in the world: stories which destroy and stories which liberate. And the stories that destroy us are the stories of the mind, stories of victimhood, stories of abuse, stories where we're experiencing self from a [proportionality] of effect to situations, to conditions, to coalition which is our side of ourselves and we keep repeating them and there has to come a time, there has to come a time where you really wake up and realize the illusion and nature of what you've been telling yourself. There has to come a time. And then you can really open up with these stories which are liberating, which are really in the beginning might seem like stories to you. You have to believe in them but then you realize as you believe, you can move towards them and then the belief disappears and it is replaced by a deep knowing. You see, in that knowing, there is no doubt anymore. In that knowing, there is no victim. In that knowing, there is no self hatred or hatred of the other. It is a spontaneous forgiveness of every being in your life including yourself. And one thing which I also have had work with people who have had any self abuse or addiction, right, because all other abuse also leads people to addiction that when you experience your own healing, you start to come to your own wholeness. You also heal your lineage. You really somehow at least to a certain degree heal your lineage whether that is your mother or your father or any relation which influences you. You kind of really heal them because a pendulum is swinging both ways you see. The distinction present, past and future only of the mind. So as you really radically start to shift in the present moment, we're also healing our past. We're really healing everybody in our past.

Tommy: I love that and I often feel as many people do supported by my ancestors...

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: That there's a energy—they're pushing me forward and I believe that my ancestors really want me to succeed at this.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: And maybe it's self centered on their part. They get something out of it too.

Anand: Yes, I see. I mean I see it. Be selfish, you see. It's environmental. But in your selfishness, include more. As you get bigger and bigger, your selfishness will include more and more beings. It will include more and more beings because in the end, we the whole. And the whole is selfish, everybody who is in the whole gets healed by that, gets touched by that.

Tommy: You know, in our path of recovery, we talk a lot about resentment.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: Resentment towards another human being, resentment towards a situation or an institution and it's said that resentment is the number one offender that it destroys more addicts than anything else.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: I'd like to discuss resentment with you a little bit.

Anand: Resentment becomes a chronic thing, you see. It really becomes a chronic thing which is not even—it just becomes a state of your being. And really it comes from again it is very close related to the story teller, right. For us to stay in resentment, it has to be a strong positionality we are to occupy within the story so we can keep justifiable resentment. A lot of times people unbelief of the story because if they give up their story, then they have to give up the blame. They have to give up the resentment. But we don't realize is that in that giving up of that, we are actually gaining the world. We are actually gaining our power because it's only a victim who can be resentful. A being who has forsaken his or her power. As you come to your power, you realize that no resentment in your anymore. You can see things for what they are. Yes, there's a scorpion and there's the nature of the scorpion. And once upon a time, you might have stepped on a scorpion and the scorpion bit you but you don't have a resentment, you forget the scorpion anymore because it's just a scorpion. The scorpion is a scorpion. You're far greater than that little event that might have occurred in you. So in the resentment really, the forgiveness or the compassion above all liberates the individual who forgets, right. It liberates you first and everybody else secondly. It liberates you is [0:32:20] such a block energy. It's really the cancerous energy.

Tommy: Yes.

Anand: It really blocks our natural flow and irrespective of how much money you have, what relationship you are in, you will always be unscripted even on a physical level. It is this closing energy.

Tommy: Yes.

Anand: While forgiveness and compassion is moving outward.

Tommy: Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Anand. I want to speak a little bit about relationships and by that I mean love relationships, that can be man-woman, man-man, woman-woman, whatever it is but in love relationships I hear all the time especially among people in recovery, I'm hearing a lot of things especially and I don't mean to be sexist here, it just happen to be I hear this a lot from women that they're looking for their soul mate, their soul mate. And in my opinion, that concept, the misunderstanding about soul and soul mate

gets in the way of relationship and sometimes can end relationships. Can you speak about a bit about that?

Anand: You see, I say a lot of times, these are new age concepts we have built just to maintain our skepticism, you know. My take on soul mates is that we are souls and we like to mate. And that's why there is soul mates, you see.

Tommy: Yes.

Anand: So I talk about relationship basically, just even the word relationship, it's kind of a funny word. It's based on an idea that somehow you will find a ship, you will get on that ship and that ship will sail and it will sail the sunset and somehow it will take you to a place that is utopic where life is all beautiful and then you get on the ship and then you learn that is this the right direction? Is this my soul mate ship? Is this ship going? Who is steering the ship? How do I get off the ship? Oh I didn't want to get up in this ship anyways. You're like them it is not the ship you want to get on. And it gets so complicated by the end. Only if we talk about love, our working experience is violence. It's insecurity. It's blame. It's self sabotage. So when we talk about love, I think the first relating and the relating, it is about relating the desire of the soul. The first desire of the soul is to [connect to spirit]. The second desire is to relate, the third is to create, the fourth is to serve, the fifth is to self actualize and the sixth is to harmonize. These are six basic desires of the human soul. Now we have to realize the first desire process to be paid attention to which is the desire to [spirit] because that is our number one relation. Our number slot to our relation is our vertical. Every other is secondary. It's horizontal and the only relation which will liberate you is the vertical relation. If you don't have that relation clear, your horizontal relations are based on neediness. Now you can fantasize and give them all kinds of names, [pains 0:35:21], soul mate but those are just concepts because you meet a person and you say he's my soul mate or she's my soul mate and then two months down the line, it's a whole different story. So we have to realize that the vertical is the key and then we have a really clear that nothing replaces that slot one, that slot one of our life, of our relating is our vertical practice, our being clear and connected with existence stuff, then in our relationship. We don't look for love. Otherwise we are asking the donkey to carry the elephant. It just can't work. You see otherwise, you're really coming together as two needy souls and eventually, not be able to fulfill each other's neediness and then you will become the point of all the problem, right. So as we come to our whole and then two whole souls can come together and we can solve each other and what evolution without any sense of ownership and neediness, give each other a space but be very clear that the other person's job is not to fix you, not to make you happy or not to prove you right. The other individual soul who is having his or her own journey and you are having your own journey and you are chosen to come together only to share love, not to be loved. To share love because you are love itself, that's who you are. And in that sharing, sometimes you might chose to end it. It can continue for a long time. For sometimes, you might realize, okay we have walked enough distance together and now we need to walk our separate ways. And it doesn't have to get ugly. Sometimes I meet people and

then we'll be together for a while but then it's natural. You can see naturally that life is taking them to two different directions, right. But then they fill the mind, feel the necessity to make it ugly somehow so we can justify hatred because there's such a shame on hatred. So my take on relation really is the vertical first and then come together not from your neediness but from your wholeness and be very aware. And then it's a really committed practice one has to do because in that dynamic, your neediness comes out very quickly behind closed doors.

Tommy: Yes. I'm thinking of the people that might be watching this interview now who find themselves in a relationship where they know that they're not a hundred percent whole yet and both parties are sort of working on it. So is it possible to evolve? Can you bring consciousness in to a relationship that might have been previously unconscious?

Anand: Definitely. Definitely. Because beneath our unconscious is potential consciousness, you see. Unconsciousness is illusion anyways but really this is consciousness so the moment we turn on the light, whatever it is, consciousness, that's the beauty of consciousness that it meets you wherever you are at. It is inclusive. It is not exclusive. It includes everybody in your life. It includes all the situations in your life and then it transforms them. You don't have to run away from anything. It pays you the way you are, the way you are and turns you inside out. So including any relationship you are and might be with, and in that it's helpful if the people involved in the relationship can practice but often it happens that one partner is not really interested in it as the other part but as long as one can practice fully because it really is about you coming to your wholeness and setting that person free and setting yourself and others free from the neediness. So then in that they can [make] deeper appreciation also. You can appreciate more the individual in front of you with all their imperfections.

Tommy: Now, Anand, you were featured in the movie, the documentary, The Highest Pass, and I saw that movie and I loved it and that was actually the first time that I had come across you and learn about your teachings. It's a movie that's filled with allegory and symbols and metaphor actually, even the title, The Highest Pass.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: Can you speak a little bit about that experience and just explain for people who haven't maybe seen it, what's going on? Where are you taking people through?

Anand: You see the invitation The Highest Pass [0:39:55] a lot of people don't get it as really like the—it's a metaphor. It's an invitation for you to really dig in. The Highest Pass really stands for the highest self, to really caution who are we and what are we living for and that's where the movie begins with the course with me which is only the one who dies truly lives, only then there's liberation from fear, from holding on, and that death that I'm talking about is death of the story, the death of the limited self, the death of all the lies we have been telling ourselves over and over again. Then that part of us dies. There's a new part which really emerges

like the phoenix. That's the icon this new brilliant self that comes. And that's the whole journey that people have confronted you say you want to be on a motorcycle is going to the highest railroad in the world, the challenge make some decisions which are really gear to what really pushing the people so they can really transform themselves as to who they really are because all of our tendencies are very hidden in self conscious and unconscious level. They only arise when you're triggered, when you're pushed too far. So in that journey, there is a lot of it where we devised means and movement where we would have to really confront your tendencies. And that was the whole journey based on the divine, you are in a beautiful land, meeting the oracles, going to all monasteries, meditating and starting in Rishikesh again which is the birthplace of yoga and ending in [0:41:23] it is a powerful journey.

Tommy: Yes. I just love the film. It really took me there. And I remember thinking before I even met you that I was scared of you and I would not get on a motorcycle behind you. No way, absolutely no matter what. I might choose to stay a little lower than the highest pass.

Anand: We filmed another one last year. We did another journey actually with 80 people.

Tommy: Wow.

Anand: We went to four sacred peaks: [0:41:58] and the valley of flowers in [0:42:02] with a little bit of walking and hiking also. It's a journey of self purification and the question in this journey what we have really explored is what does it mean to be free. What does it mean to be free and beyond the political definition of free? Because I know the definition of freedom we have is very political and financial. Those are the two dominant definitions of freedom that we carry around but really has nothing to do with our personal freedom. These are only concepts which are created by society. So that's the question we ask, also the question we're exploring in this [CD] is how the world we inhabit, right? the bubble and how the bubble really almost destroys us and part of what evolution but starting the bubble, who we are, who we have been. The stories we have been telling ourself do not make sense anymore. That moment has to arrive in our lives because if that moment is not arriving, then we are not evolving.

Tommy: And this is going to be another film?

Anand: This is going to be three or five part document series. So it's just in post production right now and Adam Schomer who was in The Highest Pass, you might have met him. He is working on it right now.

Tommy: How exciting. That's exciting. And you've released an online course called Himalayan Wisdom for Life Beyond Fear.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: Can you speak about that course?

Anand: I think one of the big reasons why our disconnection over insanity is fear, our [0:43:46]. This fear of life. We are almost afraid of love itself. I always there are two options that you're given constantly in life, either to move through grace or to move through fear. When you move through grace, you realize that all this grace including all the challenges in your life and all the pain that you might have experienced it will lead you to evolution. When you are afraid, you will look at your whole life as a threat. So you will constantly meet life as a threat, as a potential threat, every situation is a threat. So it shows that trust, it shows with control. It shows with financial insecurity, so on and so forth. But then there are beings who are really live from the core, they're living it from the flow of grace. They realize life, we are here today, gone tomorrow. There's a date of birth and the date of death and between is the hyphen, and that's your life. So if that hyphen is grace, it's love itself. It's grace. And so that's the course really how to work beyond fear, how to really recognize this life as grace. So there are certain exercises, wisdom, courses, so on and so forth.

Tommy: How long a course is that? If you sign up for the course, what does it take?

Anand: I think it's a seven-week.

Tommy: Seven-week course.

Anand: Yeah.

Tommy: Okay and you've got a book coming out soon I think called The Free Life.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: Can you speak about that?

Anand: Yeah. You see again, as I said the document readers we have is questioning what is freedom and that's what the book is really about what is freedom, the free life.

Tommy: Yes.

Anand: What is free life? Where's the [freebie], you know? Does it look a specific way? Does she walk a certain way? What is her way of life? What does a free life feel like? This is more of an exploration instead of "Hey, this is how it looks like." It is more of an invitation to really for us to look within and question certain established belief systems we might have.

Tommy: Yes. It seems that I have not met too many people who I would call free in my lifetime.

Anand: Yeah.

Tommy: So there are people right now who are telling themselves or trying to hang on to their story.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: ... as we've been talking about. And at the end of my story before when I finally put down drugs and alcohol for the last time, what happened for me was it was a single thought and the thought was "I will never be able to experience myself if I can't get past this problem. I will never be able to know what my life could have been if I don't let go of this drugs and alcohol. I can't put it down. And I couldn't live with that thought." And so that was the thought that ended the story. And in the moment after the story was over, there was a moment of emptiness and it was not a moment of happiness or contentment or relief. At first, it was a moment of sadness, a great, great sadness.

Anand: Yes.

Tommy: All of my thoughts, my words, my actions, everything to this point has lead me to this place of emptiness. I don't know what I am. I don't know what I'm supposed to do. I don't know how to move forward and I think this is the moment that people would rather stay stuck in addiction than face and move through that moment.

Anand: Exactly.

Tommy: Can you speak and maybe give some words of wisdom for people who might be concerned about having to come to terms at that moment in their life?

Anand: That's the moment where I talk about only the one who dies truly lives, only then there's liberation from fear, from holding on, you see. That moment of emptiness. That moment of profound confrontation, the truth, they come face to face. That overwhelming sadness eventually lead you to compassion. That pain in that moment is the greatest promise. Can pain within that psychological, that is the rebirth, that is the finishing moment. See that is the moment of [alchemy]. And we have to have trust in that. If we have real trust in that, that that moment is essential part of our journey and accept that and be open to experiencing that instead of trying to judge it and fix it and panicking in it. Allow that experience to wash over you. It will renew you. It has to be confronted. That is the moment. That's why in yoga, the first teacher of yoga is Shiva. So every human being has to come to that point. That's the start of it That's the start of it. Even the Buddha had to come to that moment when he was living within a bubble, right. His life also is life of addiction. The Buddha have realized because it was a life of falsehood, lies. He was living in a little palace, where his father is telling him all the

time a story and keeping him deluded enough hoping that he would not become the monk that the masters have proclaimed he would. So he was deluding, living in a fantasy world but that moment came where he—and it was not as planned, right. It just spontaneously happened to him when he was walking to the journey and he was really profoundly came face to face with suffering and he could not escape it anymore. That was the moment of beginning a Buddha, not under the tree. That's just the continuation of that moment but the moment of the awakening of Buddha, what that confrontation, that moment of realization, that "Oh my God, there is suffering and this suffering is coming from ignorance and I must take the responsibility for it instead of escaping within my palace again, within the same bubble, draw the curtain and stop blaming the dogs in the wall.

Tommy: Thank you. Anand, we've spoken a lot about the self and the highest self and we've talked about a lot about the individual and the process of the individual moving forward. Just as a final theme, can we discuss the importance of community in moving forward on our spiritual path?

Anand: Yes. You see, the Buddha, [0:50:33] and the Sangha. The Sangha is very important. The role that we have as a community of people because we can't, you know when we are a community of like-minded individuals because shared intention [silence/audio blank 0:51:35]. That's what above all a community is really. Everything is second but the basic definition of a spiritual community is that people come in together with a shared intention. Irrespective of their personalities, irrespective of their preferences, irrespective of their story, irrespective of how much pain they carry inside of them, but they come together with the shared intention and that shared intention is one of the most powerful things in the world. When we can come together with that [sincerely] that shared intention and that personal responsibility. Even in our [weak] moments we might be having a weak moment, but we plug in to that community, then we can be uplifted by the collective shared intention and in that community, we also have an individual. Every individual has to be aware of his or her own responsibility because our presence impacts everybody in the community, impacts everybody, even though we might think it doesn't but we are [massively] powerful beyond measure. Our state of being has such a profound impact. So the Sangha is really a great place where we can really support each other, where we both can solve each other and have that feeling of shared space and shared intention. I think it's a very powerful thing and as human beings, we are social beings. And if we don't have community which are based on higher principles, we will create communities and societies which are based on our shared intention but shared differences, shared dogma which has happened in the world and that's what the world is all about. It's bubbles against different bubbles. But bubbles based on dogma [0:52:30] shared intention but shared dogma.

Tommy: Thank you so much, Anand. I honestly feel I would like speak to you for the next four hours. Are you free? Quite seriously. But thank you so much for lending your voice and our wisdom to Recovery 2.0 conference. How can people get in touch with you if they want to connect with Sattva Yoga, the Sattva Yoga center? Where can people find you?

Anand: They can go on the website, mysattva.com, M-Y-S-A-T-T-V-A.com. We have now Sattva center. They're opening one in LA now and one in Canada and South Africa. They're also coming up at different places.

Tommy: Beautiful. I know a lot of people are going to come looking for your teachings and I'm super grateful that you are part of this. Thank you so much for your time.

Anand: Thank you so much, Tommy and I look forward to seeing you soon here in India soon.

Tommy: Yes. Yes, indeed.