



Conscious Life presents

The Me Beyond the Idea of Me

Guest - Parthasarathy Vaidya

Disclaimer: The contents of this interview are for informational purposes only and are not intended to be a substitute for professional medical or psychological advice, diagnosis, or treatment. This interview does not provide medical or psychological advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical or psychological condition.

[00:00:09] Jaï Bristow

Hello and welcome to this conference. My name is Jaï Bristow, and I'm one of your hosts. And today I am very pleased to be welcoming Parthasarathy Vaidya. Welcome, Partha.

Parthasarathy Vaidya

Hello. Thank you for having me.

Jaï Bristow

Thank you for joining us. So, you are a self-described mystical psychotherapist who combines spirituality and therapy in your healing work. Do you want to start by just telling us a bit about yourself and what it is you do and how you do it?

Parthasarathy Vaidya

That's a pretty complicated question that I'm not asked very often, but I will do my best. My background in terms of my education is in clinical psychology. But very early, due to my own journey with mental health, I discovered that discounting spirit... And by spirit, I mean the layer of being that is beyond the mind, beyond the cognitive.

Discounting that doesn't tend to lead to lasting results. Keeping it in the cognitive doesn't make lasting changes. And that through a lot of serendipitous events where I was magically brought into contact with the people who became my mentors and my colleagues, I went into this journey of what's deeper than that? What is the me beyond the idea of me?

And if I can access that, how can that help me heal and set myself free from the patterns that have held me back all my life. And somewhere along that journey, I realized that I'm here to help other people do that by discovering how to do it for myself. And that's where I now stand.

[00:02:01]

My journey with healing, and my journey with therapy in general, started when I was brought into the fold of Buddhism, and it was initially through Zen. And the two fundamental concepts of Buddhist thought are impermanence and no self, which is basically to say that everything is always in a state of flux. And because everything is always in a state of flux, your identification of something or yourself as some constant entity is pretty much an illusion.

And this is a very uncomfortable concept for most people to wrap their heads around. And it was for me initially as well. But the more I sat with it, the more I realized. Yeah, I'm not one constant person, and why should I impose upon myself the need to be? Why should anyone?

Why is there not space for the openness to say, in this moment, this is what I am, and that's okay. In the previous moment, this is what I was, and that's okay. And whatever my responses were, whatever my feelings were, were the grand totality of the universe's forces focused upon me in that moment. There was so much going on I couldn't see.

And going a little bit deeper into this. This is also a contentious topic. But I take issue with the materialistic view of the world. Because in doing so, we don't acknowledge that there's so much our senses cannot perceive. And if we count on our senses and the measurements that our senses can decipher as our entryway into reality.

I can't tell you what the percentage is, but I wouldn't say we see more than 10% of what's really going on. And when you allow that to become a possibility in you, you see that there's so much more that you can do with how you function and so much more that you can do to set yourself free from the parts of you that you're not very fond of, that keep causing you suffering.

Jaï Bristow

And how then does this work tie in with trauma healing, would you say?

Parthasarathy Vaidya

Understanding that we are made up of different selves in different parts is fundamental to healing, whether it's trauma or other patterns. Because whenever we have an experience, it creates a fragmentation of the self. A traumatic experience.

And as far as the literature goes, there's the classic *The Body Keeps the Score*. And in that it's discussed how there's a freezing of the experience in time. And that freezing is not only cognitive. It is accessed cognitively, I'm sure. It's also accessed in the body, but it's an entire state of being. It's a little slice of reality that is now captured inside you and is unable to release and move forward.

It's as if the waves of life are trying to move through you, but this part is stuck, so they can't go through that. And it keeps recurring. It keeps influencing the ways in which you function. And so acknowledgment of no one constant self is essential in setting yourself free. Because as much as that has happened to me, it can be really liberating to allow yourself to stop identifying with that

experience, because trauma is a reliving of the past and the present. It's residual in the sense that even though it's over, it continues to live in me.

[00:06:19]

But I can set it free. And I can set it free through the spiritual path, or the practices in the spiritual path. By accessing the greater field of what a lot of people call fundamental consciousness, or the emptiness or the void, whatever you want to call. There's a lot of different words for it all over the world, but they're all talking about the same thing, which is seeing yourself as a drop, as a very vibrant drop in a vast ocean of happening. And you as a drop are made up of very many different other little drops.

And it can seem reductive... I'm very conscious of that. It can seem very reductive when I talk about it this way. But that sense of belonging to a vast reality really lets you zoom out with a tenderness towards your past. That's what I try to help people who work with me access.

It's ultimately about setting yourself free from what everybody tells you you're supposed to be, what you tell yourself you're supposed to be, and discovering what your real being is so that you start taking steps from there, you start walking from there.

Jai Bristow

Amazing.

Parthasarathy Vaidya

Does that make sense?

Jai Bristow

It does. I really appreciate the way you phrase that. Setting yourself free from everything or everyone you feel like you should be. That people are telling you to be and finding your true, authentic self. And I know in my own journey that's been a huge theme. And I think a lot of people can relate. We're so conditioned by our early environment, our family environment, whatever that looked like. By our cultures, by society, by all the people in our lives. By religion, spirituality, by schools, by work.

And there's all these messages telling us how we should behave, how we should feel, how we should be a lot of the time. And all these expectations and these very reductive boxes a lot of the time. So the way you're talking about not only are we as individuals just like drops in a much greater ocean of happening, of consciousness, of being. But we also, within each of us, have all these different parts. And so the idea that we can be reduced to just one rigid, constant thing is actually what's absurd when we think of it in that way.

So I really appreciate the way you're talking about different cells, about the way you're talking about being in flux, moving away from the rigidity and trying to access what's true, what's authentic. And I think it can be very challenging work because it's that metaphor of trying to explain water to a fish, right? When you're very much in it, how do you then take a step back and

realize? How do you know what your authentic self is when we all are so conditioned by our environment to believe who we should be?

[00:09:45] Parthasarathy Vaidya

Yeah. And as you were saying that, I want to share how I really see the world. And I feel like this will inform quite a lot of my process. You are a collection of squiggly lines that I see as a person. My nervous system sees all of these little squiggles of happening and formulates the shape, the form of a being. We take for granted that that's who you really are.

You're not necessarily what I see you as, and an extension of that... I am not necessarily what I see me as. And when we accept the knowledge that has existed for thousands of years across cultures, whether it's the eastern cultures or the western ones, whatever schools you go to.

Around two millennia ago, there was the doctrine of vibration, Spandana, that came out from Kashmir. Kashmiri Shaivism, of seeing Lord Shiva as the fundamental primordial being and everything else as the squiggles that came from it. And this is just an example. I'm not saying that you ascribe to this mode of belief. But we've known for a very long time that what you see is not what is. It is simply what the nervous system makes of what is.

And when you direct that knowledge upon yourself and you start seeing that, I am also many, many squiggles. And they can either be in harmony and create a chord that sounds nice, that functions nicely, like music. Or they can be in disharmony and really get in the way of me creating a beautiful melody.

And the main block to that is, all of these squiggles put in there by other people telling us what we are supposed to be for the stability of the collective. That worked for a really long time, because you needed to follow the protocol and the script in order that people don't see you stepping too much out of line. So that you align with the structure of the society that you're born into. Because it was a time when the establishment of that structure was of supreme importance.

We've now cycled to a phase in our path as a species where the rigidity of the structure is very obviously stifling what life can create through us. But there is the trauma of this as well, of breaking away. But, yes, you were going to say?

Jaï Bristow

No, exactly. I'm glad you brought in that trauma piece at the end, because I really hear this idea of we're all squiggly lines and different perceptions. The way I perceive you isn't who you actually are. I perceive you based on my history, my conditioning, my projections, my expectations, my hopes, my dreams, my trauma, my I don't know.

But I'm not perceiving you as you actually are, because how can I know who you really are? And then I hear again this piece about not only am I not perceiving you as you actually ever are. But it can also be hard to perceive ourselves as we actually are, because we're even perceiving ourselves through this conditioning, this expectation, this history, this trauma and all that. Very concretely, very practically, how does this framework support our understanding of ourselves and trauma healing?

[00:13:38] Parthasarathy Vaidya

So, the philosophy of it aside. Once you allow a glimpse of the fact that whatever is causing me suffering is a stored pattern within my being. Whether it could be in the body or the part of your being that may extend outwards. It's almost like with my clients, I like to call it a little song that's caught inside of you and it's looping.

When you acknowledge that almost as an entity in itself, and you are in a safe space in the presence of somebody that you know can hold you, you allow that song to play out in your body, and you see it through to the end. The loop has broken. So this goes well beyond the philosophy of it. It is an embodied experience of this way of looking at the world, showing actual results in your path as a human being.

Jaï Bristow

100%. And I really like that idea of how trauma and wounding and stuff is this pattern in us. Almost like a song that's been frozen or gets stuck, right? And that, actually... I think it was with Mel Cassidy on the Heal Toxic Relationship Super Conference. Though I may be wrong, because I've done a lot of interviews recently, that we were talking about the need for completion responses.

And so really what I'm hearing you say is that trauma healing is part of that. And that's why bringing in the spiritual element, the psychological element, bringing in the whole holistic approach of how do we realign? How do we find balance? How do we get our nervous systems to play out what's needed in order to come back to baseline?

So it's not about suppressing it, it's not about dismissing it, it's not about getting rid of the feelings. It's not about magically healing with a magic pill or a magic wand. It's about actually completing what needs to be completed. Is that what you're saying?

Parthasarathy Vaidya

Absolutely. And I want to go into a little bit more detail about that. So, across both psychology and the biology of perception, we're finding a lot of dual process models of how things work. Dual process in the sense that there is an accelerant and a brake. And the balance between these two, how these two forces interact, is what, like a car or any vehicle causes motion across space.

And Ayurveda describes this as the fundamental interplay between three forces, which is Rajas. Rajas is the force towards expansion. Tamas, which is sometimes called lethargy or inertia, is the force that keeps things constant and prevents them from moving. And the magical equilibrium, sattva in the middle of it.

How this bears upon trauma is the dual process model kind of breaks. Because it's almost like when the trauma happens, you leave the car and the car keeps zipping around, and there's nothing really to brake it. So the dual process there turns into a chain reaction that you are no longer observing. Because it's happening in a part of your being that you don't want to look at because it's too painful. But since the brakes are not being applied, it only becomes worse.

And the spiritual, the holistic way of looking at it, is really about bringing your presence in to what is happening in your being in order that you can, through consciousness, start to apply the

appropriate acceleration and braking to your nervous system in order that that equilibrium can be established once more.

[00:17:42]

And in doing that, you have an expansion of who you are, because you just realized, oh, there is a new part of me, and I just took ownership over it. I allowed it to integrate into myself, and now I know that I have a little bit more to work with than I did before, which in itself is so empowering.

Jaï Bristow

Absolutely. And so, just to recap in lay terms, just so that I make sure I understand fully. What you're saying is that we have these systems within ourselves, between our brain, our body. We have these patterns, and we have things that play out. And if we're present when it's playing out, it's like you were talking about a car. If you're driving the car and you complete your journey and you park the car.

But sometimes trauma happens and something happens and we either dissociate or we become not present. But then the car doesn't stop, we haven't had that chance to complete the journey. So the patterns are still playing out within us, which is why we end up having these trauma responses, I think, a lot of the time.

Why we end up having strong reactions to certain events, or why we end up having whatever it is. But it's on autopilot and it's not completing its journey properly. And as you say, it can actually sort of crescendo. It can get worse over time.

We get retraumatized if we don't bring in the presence and the awareness and the ability to actually come into our bodies as it's happening and feel, to be able to complete the process. To be able to complete the journey. So I hope that that makes sense for people listening. And I just want to clarify that that is what you were saying.

Parthasarathy Vaidya

Yes. And just as a final statement of that, your presence gives the car a destination. Where do I go such that the journey ends? And that is back towards myself, back towards my core being. And once that happens, it's almost like our presence has a gravity to it. And when these different parts of us, the traumas, feel the weight and the mass of who I am. Of my presence, they have something to come into the orbit of and settle. I'm sorry if I'm being too complex.

Jaï Bristow

No, I think you're bringing in some really interesting perspectives, and I think it's important on a conference like this to bring in different points of view, different perspectives, different ways of thinking, different frameworks. So, yeah, I don't think that it's too complex. I think it's just a different way of looking at trauma. Because trauma in itself is complex.

Which is why it's so important that we have these conversations, that we talk about it, and that we offer different ways for people to connect more fully to themselves and to free oneself of all this

conditioning, these patterns, because they're harmful. These harmful patterns, these harmful conditions, these harmful responses which harm oneself and other people.

[00:21:07]

And as we go into this journey that you're describing, as we incorporate these practices that you're describing, then it allows ourselves to not just heal ourselves. But also the more we connect with ourselves, the more we become more fully ourselves, the more we also have capacity to hold presence and space and support others on their journeys as well.

Parthasarathy Vaidya

Yes, and this really segues me. Thank you so much. You just segued me into how I work and what my primary way of working is about, which is the non-duality, if you want to call it that, between me and any client. When we're in that space, there is a real acknowledgment that rather than being two separate people, there's a field that's being created here.

I am allowing them as a being beyond the body to combine with mine. And in doing, there is a very precise relating. In including somebody else as a part of yourself, you then have access to genuine compassion. You have access to information that is in their presence rather than their words.

And in this combined field that you create, there is so much of a capacity for healing just through relation, because the trauma you have has a point now to be witnessed by a therapist or a friend or anybody who is in that position of holding space.

There's the gravity of another presence as well. So the trauma now has, if your presence is not fully there, if you're not able to muster that it still has a destination when the person with you is including you as a part of them, if that makes sense.

Jaï Bristow

Two things I hear here, because on the one hand, everything I've learned about trauma is that trauma happens when there is a lack of holding in your environment. Whether that's from another person, whether it's from yourself, whether it's from a therapist, a doctor. Trauma happens not so much because of the wounding events or the harmful events, whether they're physical or emotional. But because the lack of holding and support for our systems to reregulate and come back to baseline after those events or during and after those events.

So I really get what you're saying about how in your work, you create that holding, you create that safety to enable the completion process, to enable the healing, as opposed to the retraumatizing.

And at the same time, I also hear when you talk about there is no separation between you and the client. That kind of merging the field, that in a lot of western psychological practices is a big red flag, right? The idea is that there has to be separation. There has to be clear boundaries between the practitioner, the therapist, whoever it is, and their client. So could you say a little bit about that?

[00:24:19] Parthasarathy Vaidya

I don't mean the lack of separation as a performance, as an outwardly perceptible thing. I mean this lack of separation as a feature of the holding. I'm not saying that you're not another being in the field. I'm not saying that you're not your own entity. But there is a holding of that while honoring that, there is a larger field that we are drops in, to go back to that previous metaphor. And this is, in describing it, it might be slipping through my fingers. But it's not about dishonoring the boundary. That boundary is important because the sovereignty of the person is threatened by trauma as well. So that should be a red flag. This is a feature of the holding.

Jaï Bristow

Absolutely. And I think that's a really important distinction to make. So I'm really glad you clarified that. That there is a separation between the physical beings, between even the emotional, physical bodies. Like, this is who I am, this is my entity. This is your entity. And there is a separation there. But within the holding, within the space, within the energetic field, it's happening relationally.

And that often trauma is created relationally. Not always, but often. And therefore, often trauma is also healed relationally. I think it's really important to make that really clear that it's within that energetic field. And not, "Oh, let me share my trauma with you whilst you're sharing yours with me". Or "Let me just come and hold you physically without that separation". Because those, like you say, they are red flags. And so I'm glad you brought that piece in.

Parthasarathy Vaidya

I'm really glad that you clarified, because I'm so intuitive with this being a feature of the holding that until you brought that up, I didn't know how it sounded in terms of physical distinction. So thank you for catching that.

Jaï Bristow

Of course.

Parthasarathy Vaidya

Yeah.

Jaï Bristow

So, Partha, we're coming towards an end soon. But we've gone really into a lot of the theoretical, and we've clarified and brought in the trauma piece. What are some very... And we've talked know often about that relational holding. Working with a coach, with a therapist, and making sure it's someone who has that capacity for that holding and for that relational healing. Because if not the danger is of going into retraumatization. And that there are healthy boundaries and separation, as well as then the relational field which is more merged.

But my question therefore, to you is, what are some practical exercises that people can do to begin this process of bringing in presence and awareness and getting back into the driver's seat to be able to create these completion responses and drive all the way home to oneself?

[00:27:18] Parthasarathy Vaidya

At the risk of sounding like a cliché in the psychology community, a curious kind of meditation. There's nothing else that I have found, both in facilitating these spaces for clients and also within myself and my own journey. It's a looking inward with an attitude of "Hmmm, what's that? Maybe I don't need to come to a conclusion about what that is, I'll just see it. And if it feels too scary, I will get help so that somebody can hold me while I see it".

But rather than a practice, it's about an attitude towards inner experience. And that attitude can be facilitated by the practice. But it's really about the curiosity of, okay, I have a certain idea of how things are supposed to work inside me, because everybody has told me so all my life. My parents gave me certain programming about it, my teachers gave me certain programming about it.

But what if all of that is made up when it comes to me? What if I look at it as a movie, that I don't need to say anything about, that I don't have to pick it apart. I don't have to tell anybody about it or be able to describe it. But what if I see it. And in seeing it, I understand how the motion inside me happens from one moment to the other. What is the song that is playing in me? Can I hear it for what it is rather than what I've been told it's supposed to be? And we're coming back to what we started with. And I think that's really beautiful.

The core... Let me rephrase this. The core outcome of healing trauma, or healing in general, is liberation. And this liberation extends across the relational field. It extends to your parents, it extends to your partners, because intergenerationally, across relationships, it is held in this almost like crystal structure of things happening across generations, things happening across partners.

And when we remove the expectation for ourselves and for other people to act in a specific way. And we create the space for people to be authentic in our presence. And people will tend to become more authentic in the presence of an authentic person. I don't know what the science of that is. I can only speak observationally. But if you commit to a practice of exploring this authenticity and just saying, "I don't need to be anything right now", you're halfway there in terms of that form of growth. Does that make sense?

Jaï Bristow

Absolutely. And I really appreciate how you bring in how healing leads to freedom. And I think sometimes when we begin our healing journeys, we have this expectation of what healing is going to look like and how we're going to feel on the journey or after being on the journey for a while. But first of all, I don't believe these journeys are linear. I don't think there ever is an end to that.

But the more we do healing practices, the more we connect to ourselves. Whether it's spiritually, psychologically, everything... You know, physically. The more we do all of that, the more we find freedom. And that's the gem. And that's not even the destination, that's not the end goal. But that is the beautiful side effect where...

And again, I was talking about this with someone recently. It's not so much that suddenly life gets easy. It's that we have more freedom to not get hooked by the difficulties and the challenges within life. We have more freedom to not just repeat the same patterns on autopilot again, but to be able to just observe what's happening within us without having to play it out.

[00:31:52]

So I really appreciate the way you brought that in and the way you talked about seeing it almost as a movie that we don't have to be in, we don't have to write a dissertation about. We don't have to unpick, we don't have to judge. It's just a movie or a song playing in our heads that we can just see what's going on in ourselves at this moment without having to be controlled by what's going on within ourselves.

And I also really appreciate the piece you brought in about... We sometimes say "Hurt people hurt people, and healed people heal people". Although "healing people", I prefer to say. Because again, I don't think there is such a thing as healed, but "healing people heal people".

And so again, that piece around authenticity makes sense. The more you've done this work and the more you found liberation and healing. And the more you can be authentic within yourself, the more it gives permission and space for the people around you to also be authentic. So I think this has been a really beautiful conversation. I really appreciate your time and all the different elements you've brought in today. How can people find out more about you and your work?

Parthasarathy Vaidya

So, as of right now, I work with two firms. One is [I Am Wellness](#) based in India, and that's where I work as a therapist. And I work with [Healing Exchange](#) based out of the US as a life and relationship coach. And both of these entities have different philosophies and different things that they work with. And that's why I work with two of them separately.

Without taking too much more of the time, I guess you will be posting the links and you can just go check me out on either of those. I'm also on Instagram as [@sa_rathy](#) where you can get to know me a little bit more intimately. And I have a few social media projects that are in the making, and by the time this is posted, I'm sure they'll be up so people can catch me there as well.

Jaï Bristow

Fantastic. And those projects in India and the US, do they only take clients from India and the US, or do they take international clients if people want to work...?

Parthasarathy Vaidya

International clients as well. Yeah, but it's just I do different things in each firm.

Jaï Bristow

Yeah, fair enough. Amazing. Thank you so much for your time today. I really appreciate it.

Parthasarathy Vaidya

Thank you. Thank you for having me.