

Interview with Roger Voorhoeve – Meditation Teacher

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Q1. My spiritual seeking really tires me. As soon as I believe I have found something, it seems to slip away from me, and I am left with nothing. Then I move onto the next thing...constantly seeking. Can you comment on how this seeking felt for you in your meditation practice, and whether is ever even possible to find "the truth"?



I wasn't a seeker, but I did have a strong longing - a deep desire for purity. The depth of life shown in pure nature was just not in me. I felt separate, not part of the stream of life. It wasn't that something was missing, but I was constantly topping up life with personal desires and reactions. It was just impossible for me to take it as it is. This became very clear to me once when I was diving. While my whole body was deeply entrenched in nature, "I" was replaying an argument from months ago. I became aware that compulsive thinking closed me off from my nature.

Fear is the only obstruction to reality. Once the fixed identity dissolves, life flows into you. The past is no longer active, and gives way to the present, the only reality. Letting go of the deepest belief - "I am the body/mind", is an extremity that asks for constant observation and a deep trust in the practice and teacher. The seeking (suffering) ends once the illusion of a separated entity is seen through. "Becoming" transforms into "Being".

Q2. You also speak a lot of the energy that you feel in meditation, but since your breakthrough it seems that energy is with you all the time? In yoga, we term this energy as "kundalini". How does it feel to live in this highly energetic state all the time?

Once you don't resist the stream anymore, you gradually start to dissolve into it. You live it instead of experiencing it. It is home. The energy changes all the time. In the beginning the energy was gross with a lot of movement - like a roaring lion or a diesel generator. Lately it has become denser than ever before, with a very high frequency, like a nuclear reaction. It feels like travelling in this space-less dimension. Not going anywhere, not becoming anything. The energy becomes so dense and subtle, so deep and all encompassing, so strong and purifying, that in it everything is neutralized. Time and space no longer exist,

only this radiating being, like a star in the sky.

For me, energy in the practice was the most important and tangible thing. When I first started to feel energy, it gave me the feeling there was more to discover. Energy is hard on the body and mind and for years it came in as pain. Once I could cope with the pain, I clearly saw the purifying working of it. All resistance will be neutralized by it - like melting ice in the rain.

Q3 Would you class your breakthrough as "enlightenment"? And, if so, what does this mean to you, and why label your experience?

Yes, in the Buddhist tradition it is classified as Stream Entry, the first of the four stages of enlightenment. I prefer to name it the natural state, or purification and alignment with life. It is not a static state, but a deepening all the time. Letting-go becomes a natural process. Life itself is the great teacher. The resistance to "now" will be purified by this life energy.

The term enlightenment has no meaning or importance to me, but this is what I am. It is not an experience which you relive all the time. It is a living thing. Not defined by my past anymore, the energy flows free. Independent as never before, I am reborn, not in this world but in the infinite stream of life. This energy contains everything. Not knowing anything I know I am.

I don't label this state, but sometimes words are required to explain and clarify this state. I have a deep passion to pass this on and words are there to guide people, but energy is self-explaining.

For more information on Roger's teachings, or to book in for a meditation event with him, contact:

Celia Roberts

Laughing Buddha Yoga and Ayurveda

www.laughingbuddhayoga.com.au

146 Burbong St, Chapel Hill. QLD 4069

Ph (07) 3161 4145

Interview with Roger Voorhoeve

Roger has been Linda Clair's student since 2006. He recently began teaching with Linda at the Simple Meditation Centre in Crafers West, South Australia. On April 30, 2011 he was interviewed at the centre by David Clair.

Roger was born in Leusden, Holland in 1967. He emigrated to Australia in 2005. He now lives in the Adelaide Hills with his wife and three children. He works as an architect designing energy-efficient houses.

David: So we're talking because you have become enlightened. Is that how you would express it, or would you say it in a different way?

Roger: I would use different words for it. Enlightenment never was a word that I felt very comfortable with. It's more that I feel you fall back into your natural state – the state where you feel at home. That's how I would describe it.

David: Do you feel that using the word enlightenment is misleading in some way?

Roger: When people hear the word, they can get so many expectations about what it should be or how it should be that it can be a bit misleading in my view. But if you say natural state – and that's how I feel it as well – that's how you, as a being, are.

David: So when you say natural state, what do you mean?

Roger: I mean connected to life – deeply connected. So instead of operating with your mind the whole day, with your past, and holding together your personality, you just live spontaneously. There are no expectations – or very few expectations. That's a huge relief.

So what happens is that everything that comes in, you're not processing it with your mind, but you live it. That's the whole thing. The more deeply you are in that state, the more natural it becomes. You're letting go all the time.

You're not stuck with your thoughts any more. There are still thoughts. It doesn't matter. You don't identify with them any more. You're not holding that picture of who you think you are. That's just scattered, and not important for you any more. You live in this body, and that's a completely different living to how it was before. Before, this body looked like it was living, but actually it was just operating with the mind. Now, because it's so energised, you bypass the mind and just work from your heart.

The fear goes to a large extent, and probably for the rest of your life you continue to see your fears more and can continue to let them go. But that's why it feels so

natural and why I feel so much more closely connected to pure nature, or a baby, or other things. Because it's the same beat that you are in. When I'm in nature or with somebody else who is really conscious, there is no need to talk any more. You are both living the same thing. You are the living energising beat – and that's enough.

David: So living from the heart – is that living by what you feel, not what you think?

Roger: Yes, what you feel. Sometimes thinking is necessary to live in this world – to make a choice or a decision. But most of it, you just do it from here. (He places his hands on his abdomen). Instead of having your awareness always going out, projecting yourself into the world, it's like all your awareness comes in, and you just live from this – this area. It's feeling, it's energy.

David: So you're saying you let life come into you, rather than projecting yourself on to life?

Roger: That's exactly what it is. With your thoughts you make your life comfortable the way you know it is, by what has already happened to you, and see it as your security. You're always clinging onto this. When you can let go of this more, the boundaries disappear, and it's not me in this body, living here for 60 or 70 years. It's energy, or beat, or life. I can't really say exactly what it is, but it's so much more than just a body. The body is a container in which the energy expresses itself.

David: So your relationship to the world – working, and relating with people who don't see the world as you do – how is that for you? Is it difficult to cope with the world?

Roger: You get a bit less interested in it - in getting things, and being somebody.

David: Ambition?

Roger: That's virtually gone. And I was very ambitious in Holland when I had my own architecture firm. So I know what ambition is. It's something you need if you want to get something done, but you know it's not bringing you something. You know that all you need is inside you. There can still be a little bit of ambition, through the habit of going out and getting something, but it quickly disappears, because I'm so deeply in this body that I just keep coming back.

At work I haven't told them anything, but they know I'm really deeply into this, and they give me all the space I need. When I'm at work I just do my job and that's it. Then I walk out the door, and there's no memory – almost nothing left. So that whole repetitive mind stuff that I had so much in Holland, that's gone. I do my work responsibly with all my capacity, but I'm not dragging it on into the next activity. It's the same when I talk with people. If I'm talking with my boss or a colleague, I don't want something out of that situation any more. I'm just listening, and I say what I feel is necessary, and what may be helpful. The way I used to operate was to try to manipulate the situation a bit so that there would be an advantage for me – very small things, and everybody does it. It's very innocent.

My children are absolutely fine with it. My partner is not into it, and she found it difficult to see it, but she knows that I will go this way anyway. We have had quite a few discussions and arguments about in the past, because this whole practice takes a lot of time – meditating in the morning and the evening and all the retreats. But in a way she gives me all the space I need. I told her that I felt deeply connected to life, and that was enough for her to understand why I'm so attracted to this.

David: Can she see that there's been a big change in you?

Roger: She sees that I'm very independent, and like to be by myself, not needing holidays or social events. I enjoy family life, but it's not like giving and taking any more. I love her and enjoy her company, but I don't want to get anything from her.

David: Was there a point of realisation for you, where everything turned around or changed in a dramatic way?

Roger: Yes, there was. Leading up to it there were many insights, but in the June 7 day retreat last year – I think it was the fourth or fifth day – there came a point where I felt that maybe I was pushing it all too hard, wanting it too much. I remember in a break that I was reading Linda's book, and I read that you had to forget even enlightenment. I'm probably quoting it wrongly, but it was something like that. They were the last words I read before I sat again for a couple of hours.

I sat through the break, and I had built up a lot of energy. I was keeping my awareness down in the abdomen as much as possible, and suddenly I could feel a breakthrough. It felt like a thunderstorm at that moment. I was taken over by huge energy current, and there was a lot of noise, just as if I was in a thunderstorm.

I just gave up resisting it, because I think that's what you keep doing until that point. Your body just can't take it. So the energy comes in, and it's so attractive to everybody because it's impersonal. All the other stuff is personal. The energy clears it all out. Even if it costs you a lot of pain, you still want it. It struck me really deeply in my body, and I was shaking.

After that sitting I had a shower, and I was feeling very energised and vulnerable, and maybe at the same time shocked by the whole thing. I was just sitting quietly on that couch over there. People were having lunch. I just knew that something really deep had happened to me. I felt connected – connected to life. Suddenly I realised that this huge energy field that is around me is actually doing everything. I realised that I am connected to it, rather than just being a person, thinking that I am operating from this body. You just know or feel that's not how it works. That's just what you think.

That's why life can be so hard and difficult, because you're holding onto the small person in this immense ocean of energy or life – whatever you want to call it – that's why you feel so separated, because from this immense ocean you take one drop and you say that is me! (He laughs) Look, this is me, and *that* is life. (He points away

from himself.) You feel that you've come back home, and instead of pointing at your life, you're expressing it all the time.

Linda said that day that I was in the early stages of enlightenment, but that there was still more work to do, and I knew that because my mind could still grab me. I could still become a bit emotional, but that was the turning point. That was the time that the curtain opened for me, and I saw really clearly. I say 'saw', but is not really seeing, it is just being your true nature.

David: And when that happened, was there anything that you could compare it to? Was it anything like the glimpses you'd had before? Or was it a new revelation that was nothing like the glimpses?

Roger: It's the same thing, except that with the glimpses, you're still looking through the mind. There is always fear. 'This is not for me or I will never have it'. With the glimpses, it's like you are looking at it through a very small telescope or something like that. So you see one spot. You get something and you feel really alive for a moment. But it's an experience. It comes and goes. You need those glimpses to keep going, to keep motivated. But you don't know what it is. Your teacher can tell you, but it doesn't help you. It helps you to keep going, but you need to realise it yourself.

David: What tells you now that this state is permanent and that you won't lose it? Is it the loss of fear?

Roger: Yes, that's the biggest thing. And instead of weakening, the state is getting stronger and stronger. It all takes time, so when I had that big realisation last year, I still had a bumpy six months or so before I felt more established in this state. There was fear of what was going on. 'Is this what it is?' There was still mind stuff going on. The mind was saying it should be more like this or that. It was clearing out, and taking me over more.

There is just no way back. It's not an experience which you hang on to after it's gone. This is like your heartbeat. You can compare it with that. It's always there. I'm feeling it all the time. This is life. This is how it is.

David: I'd like to ask you about the history of your search. How long have you been working towards enlightenment, or realisation?

Roger: I started in Holland and it was around the time my son was born, so that's 12 years ago that I went to a meditation class for the first time.

David: Do you remember what you were looking for? Were you conscious of looking for something, or was there just a feeling that there was something else . . .

Roger: I had the feeling more and more that this can't be it.

David: Your experience of life at the time?

Roger: I had a great life - beautiful house, everything.

David: But at the same time a deep sense of dissatisfaction?

Roger: No, not deep dissatisfaction, just something missing. It's the same for everybody. Everybody has this missing link. You want to be connected to life. Otherwise you try to find it in this world with all your desires. You think that will make you a whole person – if you have this or that, then it will be fine. But that's just making you more separate.

I didn't know what it was, but there was always that empty feeling. So you can do several things. You can socialise a lot, but that's just covering it up, so you start to look deeper, and you find places where you feel a bit more connected. For me that was Nature. That was a really great place to be. I couldn't explain it but when I was in Nature, there was a feeling of wanting to be more strongly connected to it. So it wasn't that I was in Nature having such a great time. I was in Nature to see what was missing at that time. I had no idea that the ego was separating me from that moment.

So I started doing a course. It was called Practical Philosophy. I remember it really well. They started with a body scan. Within a month or six weeks I started to feel expansions, like my limbs were really long. This was a confirmation for me that this is not all there is. From then I just started trying to find what it was. Practical Philosophy was based on being mindful. We only came together once a week, so it wasn't that intense, but at that time it was the best thing for me to do. I worked with it in my daily life, but a lot of the time I just forgot it, and I was just lost in my thoughts and my desires.

For a few months before I left Holland I had a teacher called Adriaan. He was very sick at that time, but he was still teaching. He was really open about his dying. So he died, and I went to his funeral, and it had a huge impact on me, having been taught by him for six months – with that body in front of me – his honesty.

We emigrated to Australia. We left family and friends and everything, and came to a new country, and that was huge for me as well. I realised maybe a few months before we left how deep this step was – saying goodbye to all our security, no jobs, three kids we had to feed. When we got to Australia I saw that life just keeps going. You don't need all that security. Life just keeps going.

We set up in Adelaide and that's when I met Linda for the first time for a meditation evening. Her approach was just exactly what I was looking for. There were no rituals, and it was really honestly sitting deeply in your body. It was different to what I'd done in Holland. This was much more body- based. And this was at exactly the right time for me to step into this. My personal life was clean as well, because when we came here we didn't have friends and family. I could just jump right into it and give my full attention to doing this. This was also the first time that I heard the term enlightenment.

David: so you have been with Linda for how long now?

Roger: It's around five and a half years.

David: Why do you think that you became enlightened, when so many other people who are searching, don't? There are people all over the world living in monasteries meditating for hours and hours a day, in a very disciplined environment, and very few of them seem to become enlightened. What do you think it is about you? How were you different? How was your situation different?

Roger: Well, I'm not different! The discipline here really helped me, and having a teacher who was so incredibly available. I think the best thing that happened to me was that Linda started teaching at that time. In the beginning there were maybe 10 people here. When I got into it I got a lot of attention from her. You need that. You need the guidance of a teacher. Otherwise you can get deluded so quickly, or you get frustrated. The way the meditation retreats are set up here worked very well for me. You can stay in your family life, in the world, but you also have this discipline.

David: I guess when you do a retreat here, it's like being in a temporary monastery.

Roger: Well it depends on the person, you know. When I come here, I unpack my stuff, and I know I'm staying here for four days or whatever. I've always seen it as precious time. But you can think on day two – oh, only two days to go. It depends on how you approach it. I always put everything into it. In my practice I was always really fearful that Linda might attract a large group of people, and I would no longer have that access to her – that direct contact. I also had a big fear that we wouldn't get a visa to stay here longer. So these things put a lot of pressure on me. That's really necessary, but it doesn't mean that if you do all that, that it will happen. That's not how it is.

David: But there must be something else about you, because other people have been coming here for as long as you have, and putting in a lot of effort, and they haven't come to this realisation.

Roger: Not yet, no.

David: Do you think it was that you worked harder, or were more motivated, or do you think there were karmic factors?

Roger: I don't know anything about karma. It was the right time with the right teacher. It wasn't just sitting, but it was also like a deep friendship. The practice is hard sometimes – or most of the time – but I also had the opposite, which is really warm and loving, and that really opened me up. Sitting for those long hours and going through my stuff – everybody has their stuff – from memories, from the past, *and* having a strong connection with your teacher guides you through it. For me, that was what did it.

For other people, maybe it will happen. You don't know. I know a lot of people sit for 20 years in a monastery, but it's not only about discipline. You have to discipline yourself to be mindful all the time, but it doesn't have to be in a monastery where you are shut off from the world. I found it hard sometimes after a retreat, having that openness and going back to work, but that was a very good practice for me as well.

David: You said that being mindful in your daily life is very important.

Roger: Yes, that's a really strong thing to do. So you'll not here for four days and then go home and hang out in front of the television or whatever. You can do that, but mindfulness makes the practice your life. One thing that I realised was that this is for life. This *is* life. Finally, this is life!

David: People talk about the meaning of life, and it's almost a joke to talk about the meaning of life. But can I ask you the question – what is the meaning of life?

Roger: To be it. To be life. To become life. You come as life, and you are life.

David: When you're a baby?

Roger: That's just life – when you see a newborn baby . . .

David: Purity.

Roger: Yes. And then you become a person. That's really important as well, and then you have to let that go of that person, to become that purity again. Learning to let go all the time – that's what meditation is about. So that's my view of the meaning of life – being here all the time. Being life.

David: The terms absolute and relative are used a lot in spiritual circles. What do they mean to you?

Roger: I would say that absolute is the impersonal and relative is just the person. What happens when you realise that in your body, the absolute, the energy, takes you over. So your small personal view of the world transforms into the impersonal as just a being. The relative is part of the absolute, only very fixed and limited - it's about me. I am the central part of it. The relative is always about you.

David: But at the same time, after realisation, you retain your individuality. So how do you see that relationship between the self and individuality?

Roger: You keep most of your characteristics, but your habitual behaviours don't live or rule your life any more. You don't become 'perfect'. That's a big shock, after it all happens. But the main thing about the person, is that it's always about him – that he wants to keep all his security as it is, or improve it.

David: Why was it a shock?

Roger: Because I had – as most people have – a personal ideal of perfection. Now I see that perfection is acceptance – total acceptance of whatever is happening.

David: You said we come into life as pure life, so babies are individual expressions of pure life, and all people once they are enlightened are also individual expressions of pure life?

Roger: Absolutely!

David: Are there any disadvantages to being in the state that you are now in? Do you feel that you've lost anything that you wish you hadn't lost? Does enlightenment have a downside?

Roger: Well, I can answer it a bit differently. The only thing you want is to lose more and more. And this is what I'd like to explain: once you are hit by it, once you're in that stream, there is still lots more work to do, because maybe before it was like I was looking at myself with a flashlight, and now there is this massive beam always shining at me. So every time I see some impurity, I have to let it go. That's what my meaning is now – being here all the time.

David: So that is your main motivation now?

Roger: Yes, to vibrate with Now all the time.

David: I've heard it said that enlightenment is like being deeply in love. Some people have said that.

Roger: That's exactly what it is.

David: Would that be the best comparison, for want of a better term?

Roger: Well, yes, because everybody knows that feeling when you're in love – what happens to you. Your body starts to shake, and the only thing you want is to be with her or him. And it's the same with this. It's a really deep feeling in your body and the only thing you want is more, and you don't want anything else.

Love can be a bit personal for most people, because their experience of love is for another person, so I really like to use the term 'life' which for me is the same. What happens with love is that it just flows. You're not hanging on to something any more. And when you're in love, your whole body starts to energise. You feel it in your heart most of the time. Exactly the same happens with this, only you don't need someone else to answer your love, because . . .

David: it's in you.

Roger: I would say, that's what it is.

David: What's your relationship to your desires now?

Roger: Over the five years that I've been intensively practising here in this centre, my desires have become progressively less. It wasn't that in June or July last year they were all gone. It's a really gradual process. And then when you really get the full picture, you know that all those things will never make you satisfied. So then they disappear more. There are still desires, but they are very simple. Sometimes I can have a desire for some nice food – to relax in the evening, and watch a movie. I was really happy to see my family when they came in December last year. There was a desire to see them. There can be a desire to see Linda. There can be a desire to go for a retreat – to be with this group again, to unite more. So the desire is to drop deeper and deeper.

David: So you feel the desire to relax?

Roger: Yes, it can be nice sometimes to relax. It's full on in your body, and especially after a retreat, it's good to do some things that relax your body a bit more deeply - softening the vibration a bit. I'm just a normal human being, and to watch a movie is a nice thing to do. I also like swimming – things you do with your body for enjoyment.

But you need a break from the intensity in your body. It's like this! (At this point Roger gets up, grabs David by the arm and starts shaking him.) It's just so intense being in this energy, this vibration all the time. Sometimes I wake up, and it's stronger than when I'm sitting. The alarm goes, and I need 10 or 15 minutes to adapt to it. It's really nice. (Laughs.)

David: It doesn't sound very nice. (Laughs.)

Roger: It's what you want. It's what you are! You don't have to be somebody any more. That's the peace. As you let go more, you feel the peace deeper and deeper. You may look at your own life and think, I am average. This is how life is. But if you look closely, you see so many habits, so many things you do during the day to distract yourself, so once that habit goes, everything changes.

David: Thank you.

Roger: Thank you.

1. Can you please tell me how you became interested in meditation?

I wasn't suddenly interested in meditation - it was a gradual process.

There were always the deeper questions of life in me. Questions like: Why am I in this life? How did my life start? What happens when I am dying? I wanted to find answers and collect knowledge about life on Earth and the Universe. I also tried to find out more in discussions with people, but it didn't give me all the answers - instead I had more questions.

Around the time my son was born I attended a course called "Practical Philosophy". The course started with a bodyscan and a 20 minute meditation. I experienced a deeper contact with the body and this showed me that the separation I was feeling had mainly to do with not being grounded in the body and lost in thoughts. During this course I met my teacher Adriaan. He was very sick at that time with only months to live, but he wasn't hiding his fear of death - instead he was very open about it. Seeing that pushed me more deeply into meditation.

Around that time we immigrated as a family to Australia and leaving most of our friends, family and securities behind had a deep effect on me. After a few months travelling, we settled down in Adelaide and in an advertisement at the local shops I read about simple meditation sessions with Linda Clair. During the meditation evenings, when I was sitting in front of her I saw very clearly how open she was and how naturally she responded to everything. I also felt that she didn't have any expectations of me or herself. I just saw that she is living in freedom. This made me very determined to go deeply into meditation.

2. Can you tell me about this meditation? What kind of meditation is it?

The meditation is based on the body. Feeling your body with all the sensations is a way to get some distance from the mind. To centre yourself in the body you follow the breath. The breath is the primary sensation of the body and always present. Every time we breathe in or out the abdomen expands or contracts. By bringing the awareness to this sensation and being open to all the other sensations and pains, the body will contain more energy. Sitting with my teacher (Linda) helped me enormously. Linda often looked at me for a long time. During this (eye) contact she opened me up more by transmitting energy. The more open you are, the more energy you can contain and the more grounded you become (and need to be) in your body.

3. How did you feel this energy in the body?

I felt it as pain for a long time. During retreats I sat most of the time for long hours without having a break, so the pain would build up in my body. It started often in my bottom and knees and later in my head. The pain in my head was very shocking for me. I had never experienced it before and it was very hard to sit with. It made me sometimes a bit unsure about the whole thing. My teacher had similar pains in her practice and she assured me that it was a very good sign. Once after a very hard sitting she said "I am so happy for you". Hearing that was an even a bigger shock, but at the same time I felt her honesty and compassion. Pain is an incredible teacher for me. It is very hard to sit with pain but it brings you to the point where you are able to

just "feel" it without emotionally labeling it with the mind. This was the first sign of feeling free, and I became obsessed with retreats and long sittings. After an intense session I could often feel the energy running through my body. The direct physical pain was gone and I experienced a sensation like a purring cat. There was a deeper aliveness in my body than I had ever felt before. I became more able to just sit with this current and it made my body very sensitive. It feels like the whole body is vibrating with "now". Especially when the brain vibrates it feels like everything you receive is fresh without the interference of the mind (the past). The heart opens more to include everything and the hardness I always felt in this vulnerable area transforms into life and love. The heart becomes the centre of your body.

4. What about bliss, or ecstatic feelings, rapture in the body?

Once you open to the energy everything starts to change. Being "here" is a very energetic state. Once you are "here" there is no space for the person anymore. All the personal wanting, likes and dislikes vanish. That is the big peace, the bliss and ecstasy. There is nobody reacting. The peace is to be life without needing to top it up with personal desires. Being open to what is happening is thrilling. The energy vibrates fast in my body and there is a feeling of union. The body becomes this enormous field in which everything vibrates. The outline of the body softens and there is just this deep feeling of being. Not being somebody but just being.

5. When and how did this happen

It happened during a 7-day retreat in June, 2010. It was one of the last days of the retreat. I had long sittings and was very determined to do whatever was necessary to become free of the mind. Just before the start of the morning session I read the following quote in my teacher's book "To be fully free, you need to be so grounded that you are able to let go of everything-even enlightenment". That was what I needed - I had to forget my goal and just be open. The "I" can't make it happen.

I started the morning session and felt very strong and soft at the same time and was just sitting for the sake of sitting. Half way through the sitting it felt like a huge thunderstorm came in and it took me over completely. There was nobody reacting to it, just a feeling to let it run its course. The energy was overpowering. It was very intense and at the same time there was a deep feeling of being "home". I had felt energy in my body often but this time was totally different - the person was gone and there was a total surrender to it. This time the energy became reality and brought the mind into its place.

After the session I wrote the following words;

Energy is running through my body clearing out my past. Energy makes this body alive. Energy is the motor of this body. Energy is always and everywhere. Energy takes care of the breathing. Energy is life.

After the sitting I had a shower and felt deeply connected to life. The standalone system was transformed into a grid-connection.

6. When you say that there was a thunderstorm in your body. Was it in certain parts of the body? Or was it all over. In the head and so on? If so how would you describe this energy?

The epicenter of the energy was in my head and it felt like a huge force was bringing the head to life (again) - like a jet stream for the brain, a big clean up. It is this life force that clears out the mind, the past. The energy was all over my body - all the cells were vibrating. That was the big revelation; "life is in me". It is not outside me but deep in my body. This life energy is always here and expressed in all forms. The body is the expression of the life energy.

7. Also when you say that there was nobody reacting to it. Can you please elaborate more on this?

The "ego" was weak enough to let the impersonal in. The energy took over. You can compare it with a life threatening situation where the "me" disappears for a moment. There is just "now" and the body is acting on it. The same happened in the thunderstorm. It came unexpectedly and drilled its way into my body.

"Nobody" is relative. What happened was a big shift; the foreground ("me") became the background and the background (life) the foreground. It is not that there isn't a person anymore, but the person is not the centre of attention anymore.

8. What happened to the mind at this point and afterwards? When you say, mind, do you mean thoughts and so on?

The mind is what holds on to your past and in doing this it keeps the false identity alive. This identity takes a central position and calls it "my life". Everything revolves around "me". You live in your private world. The mind creates the illusion of a separate self.

The personal is the same substance as the impersonal but it is very fixed and limited by its viewpoint. Once the obsession with yourself ends, a zooming out into life happens. See it as a drop of water (the person) merging into the ocean of life.

After the "storm" the mind lost its force and momentum even more. There is still a mind and especially during the first 6 months I could be emotional sometimes. As the energy becomes faster and more consistent, the mind moves more to the background. More and more I approach life from my heart instead of my head. Becoming less is my practice for life.

9. What about other things such as your habits or tendencies. Have any of these changed at all?

Most of my characteristics are still present, but my habitual behaviour has changed dramatically over the years. I have always been quite independent and determined and have never had the desire to do or say things just to please people. But what has changed is that there are very few emotions involved in my behaviour now.

For example, when my boss is discussing something with me I give him my honest answer. I'm just listening, and say what I feel is necessary or helpful. I am not saying things to please this person for a better outcome for myself. During and after the discussion there are hardly any

emotions in me. It is not about "me". Everything becomes very clear but not cold.

Talking without fear is talking with love.

It's the same with work and activities - I just do it and it doesn't really matter what kind of work it is. When the job is finished there is hardly any memory left. I am not dragging it on to the next activity.

10. Do you still have emotions like anger?

I haven't had much anger in my life and there isn't anger now. There can be frustrations with a situation or person but when I look closely and see that the resistance in me, this is enough to accept the situation.

I can have an argument with someone but an argument can clear out a lot and is sometimes necessary to bring you closer. After it happens, I am not judging this person. I see this person as before the argument, I feel open as usual - there is not an emotional barrier in me.

11. Do you have any of these traits outlined by Ramesam Vermuri listed below?

I feel most of the traits and especially in a meditation sitting or in a retreat they can be very strong. Other times I might not be as strongly aware of them.

12. What do you feel about science attempting to measure these traits in the blood or the brain?

Most people find science very solid - something they can trust, and see meditation as vague and mystical. Science can bring meditation closer to people by attempting to explain the traits in the body and the working of the mind. But science is based on explaining. "Now" can't be understood with the mind. The mind is personal and can't explain the impersonal. It is too fixed and limited. To be "here" you have to let go of the "wanting to understand". When the mind is still, all is one.

13. Would you be willing to conduct an EEG test on your brain patterns or your blood to measure or to detect these traits for scientific purposes?

I am not interested in it myself, but if it can be helpful for science to make a bridge to meditation, I am likely to do it.

14. Many people in the neo advaita movement tend to invalidate meditation and say that it is useless, all it does is reinforce the ego or the seeker? What are your thoughts on this?

What is the alternative? Nobody else can do it for you. Only by seeing very clearly the working of the mind you can break the obsession with yourself. It might feel unnatural sometimes to put in so much effort to become free of the mind, but I feel this effort is required to deepen life. You have to practice "letting go" all the time. That is what life is.

Many times during my practice I thought; once I am enlightened I don't have to come to the meditation centre and don't have to do the retreats and the intensive practice anymore. But when it happened I saw very clearly "this practice is my life".

You come into life as no one, through life you become someone and by letting go, you become purity again.

15. Why did you decide to go to a non-sectarian teacher over an organized religion like Zen Buddhism?

At that time I was looking for a meditation group and a strong connection with a teacher to give my life more depth. I didn't have the ambition to become enlightened, I didn't even know the "existence" of it. It was destiny that brought me to Linda.

Q 16. What do you make of this Zen koan or your thoughts about this?

The Gateless Gate

Case 38, A Cow Passes Through a Window

The Case

Wuzu Fayan said, "For example, it's just like a great cow passing through a latticed window. Her head, horns, and four legs have passed through. Why is it that her tail can't pass through?"

All beings are free. It is the illusion of a separate self (the tail) that makes you feel imprisoned. The tail can't get through. Something that isn't real limits your true nature. Once you let go of this belief, the tail passes through. This is an endless practice.

Question: *What happened to your body during the awakening process? What about your mind? How did meditation assist you with this?*

The body is extremely important. It went through a complete transformation during the years of my practice. Meditation is a practice in which you ground yourself in your body instead of being caught up in your mind. When my habitual thinking (the mind) started to subside, the 'life-force' became very prominent in my body. First it felt like a stream of energy in different parts of my body. Later this developed into a huge current felt in the whole body at most times. The life force opens up the body. It makes the body feel like space instead of a solid object. It feels like a biological transformation is happening to let the 'the present moment' kick in again.

It took me years to take in all the energy. Especially in my head and around my heart area, a lot of resistance / fear needed to be addressed before the life-force could run its natural course. Now the body feels very soft, sensitive and highly energised.

Meditation is investigating the question "who am I". This is absolutely not an intellectual exercise. In this investigation the mind is not a useful tool. So you have to find a way where the mind is less in control. For me that was to connect strongly with the body, by just feeling your body, purely feeling it without topping it up with the comment of your mind. The same happens to the other sensations like hearing, seeing etc. They become completely pure, just as they are. Through this you really start to see the working of the mind, and it is this understanding that gives you freedom from the mind.

