

Rajshree: When we're born we simply perceive. We could call that a state of meditation. Being present, alert, aware, tuned in, but not using the intellect, meaning analyzing, dissecting, judging, right, wrong, should we, should not we, and labeling everything. But what do we do? From the time we're one years old, parents want to give the extra edge in life and they start teaching the kids look, look, look apple, one, red, box, and we're so proud of it because all we're doing is showing them pictures and asking kids to label everything. But probably from the age of two on, all of our education is built around memorizing the labels and then re-labeling and re-memorizing and meditation, biohacking, all the things that we're talking about here, breathing and so on, is really about enhancing the quality to perceive.

Announcer: Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave: You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that there's a new clinical trial of digital meditation at UC San Francisco. The researchers there figured out that they could make a personalized digital meditation training program that improved attention and memory in healthy young adults. This is kind of cool. It worked in only six weeks and it's harder to hack healthy young adults because they're already healthy and young. Taking someone who's 40 or 80 or 180 and making their memory work better might actually be easier because there's more wiggle room. It's something else to take someone who's already young and strong and make them younger and stronger.

They created something called MediTrain, which is a closed loop algorithm that tailors the length of the meditation session to the ability of the participant so you don't feel like a total loser when you're first trying to focus on your breath and you don't know how to do it. It's a time honored meditation technique, but the first time you do it, it can be frustrating, so they actually modify that to make it easier for you. We're talking randomized, double blind, placebo controlled trial with 59 participants 18 to 35, and the magnitude of the effects on intention and memory, which they did not expect because of the healthy young adult thing, were similar to what have been seen in previous studies of middle aged adults after months of in-person training or intensive meditation retreats.

That's pretty crazy. They focus on breathing techniques, meditation instructions from Jack Kornfield, and regular check-ins. Six weeks, higher performance from people already at their peak. But wait a minute, they weren't at their peak, they just thought they were. Are you at your peak? I don't know. I kind of doubt it. I'm still not at my peak. I'm looking for it though, so if you can help me find it keep on going.

All right, it's a big week. My new book Super Human comes out next week, and this week our guest today has her book coming out and it's a book that I actually wrote a forward for. Super Human is something you've probably already ordered. I mean if you like the podcast, you like what I do, if you get a lot of value in an hour of time, you know that Super Human is going to take you three, four hours, five hours to read, but you're going to get a huge amount of value there so you probably already ordered it. The book that you're going to learn about and the techniques you're going to learn about in the show today are all about meditation and breathing and developing consciousness. This

is stuff that I've spent a lot of my time doing, it's been five years of daily practice. So much that I wrote a foreword for the book.

You're going, "What the heck is Dave talking about? Who could this be?" Our guest today is a former Federal Prosecutor who discovered something called Vedanta by accident and went on to become an internationally renowned teacher of its dynamic practice and deep wisdom, highly sought after self-awareness coach, training and speaker. She's run programs on meditation in 35 countries. Companies like IBM, Amazon, Microsoft, Facebook, The World Bank, Morgan Stanley, and of course India's IIT. Her name is Rajshree Patel and you're going to really like learning what you learn from her today. Her book is called "The Power of Vital Force: Fuel Your Energy, Purpose, and Performance with Ancient Secrets of Breath and Meditation." Long title, but I actually learned breathing techniques from Rajshree I think almost 20 years ago now in Saratoga, California.

Rajshree: That's right.

Dave: So it's been a while since we've connected. We re-connected about a year ago and she told me about her book. I've read the book and it is accurate and real and interesting enough so that I wrote the foreword. Rajshree welcome.

Rajshree: Thank you, happy to be here Dave.

Dave: You're an unusual human in part because of your background. You're born in Uganda, grew up in India, but moved to the US when you were a kid. You're super multi-cultural and you've been to 35 countries and taught meditation everywhere. Your spiritual master teacher is Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, who's taught millions of people. How did you go from bouncing around Federal Prosecutor to suddenly working with Sri Sri who's a very revered figure?

Rajshree: Well I think at some level my life, like many people's lives, has been where the universe plays a hand in it. As you said, born in Uganda just because India was a British colony. My parents ended up there. Then because of Idi Amin, my dad escaped as a refugee, landed in New York. I got a job as a prosecutor in Los Angeles, so I left New York and came to LA. I was new. I didn't know anybody. I wanted to meet people and I saw a sign that said Pandit Ravi Shankar, it's a common name in South India and I thought it was a sitar player, perhaps you've heard of him I'm sure.

Dave: Of course.

Rajshree: The musician. Thinking I'm going to a music concert I landed up in a breathing slash meditation program, and well if you've traveled as much as I have and the number of cultures as you're mentioning, even by that time that's back in '89, I decided to stay. Okay I'm here, curiosity is the biggest gift of all in life no matter what you're doing, and so I was curious lucky for me. I stayed and I discovered the tools and techniques, which well at some point I had the honors to teach you back in Saratoga a long time ago, as you said 20 years ago.

Dave: You kind of accidentally stumbled into it. Knowing what you know now and having read the book, was it accidental that you stumbled into Sri Sri's thing that day?

Rajshree: Well I think there's multiple levels of reality, so on the surface I could say it was accidental but then on another level looking back I think it's what I was meant for. I mean what I do today is I travel around, it's what I teach. I make a difference in my life, in other people's lives, and I can't think of anything else I would rather be doing, so perhaps it's not an accident in that level.

Dave: You're a little bit humble about this. You've established 600 meditation centers around the world and you've done 20,000 hours of coaching and done 1,500 workshops. You've been like a tireless guided missile for meditation, for lack of... Just in terms of having a really big impact. Those are some massive numbers.

Rajshree: Well I love that, I appreciate what you're saying. It is true, I have been a guided missile. It's a great word for it actually, maybe I can put that under my name as a title, guided missile. Yeah, I left my career not planning to leave my career, I went to India in '89 because the master Ravi Shankar, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, he invited me, said, "Come to India." I was just looking to hang out, meaning okay before I get settled down with family, kids, house, 2.2 kids, all of that let me go to India and maybe do some trekking in Nepal. I was just opening myself up to some new thing. I went for eight weeks and I didn't come back for five years. I was teaching three courses a day, 100 people each session. I went from India, I didn't come back for five years, I went from India to Europe, South America, throughout Asia, Canada, and now I'm back again in the US. I don't know how it's all happened other than to say it really is about vital force or energy, which you are so familiar with what you do in a sense.

Dave: Did you have to give up something to do this? I mean traveling that much did you want to have a family? I don't know if you have a family? Did relationships... It seems like traveling for five years without ever coming home would sort of create... Everyone I know who's done that is a little bit un-grounded. What happened there?

Rajshree: Yeah, so of course you "lose something" in order to gain something, but I wasn't feeling the pinch of it. I was just like that idea of a missile. Currently I'm married. In the middle there I thought I would never want to marry. I had my friends, I had family, I was fulfilled, I never had that interacting with people but in terms of a marriage or a long-term relationship it just seemed like no, I didn't know if I would want it. Then the time for that came also to settle down with that, and I still continued to travel. I want to say it's a balancing act at some level, but I don't see it that way because a balance implies you lose something while you're leaning towards one side or the other. I think that what was propelling me was at any given moment what mattered to me the most, and I was moving in that direction.

And to your point, sometimes well who likes traveling? Airplanes are not the most fun things. I'm fortunate in that when I do travel to countries I'm hosted by families so I really immerse in the culture and the country and the essence of what happens in each of those countries. Yeah, at some level it's a gain and a loss like everything in life, but I wouldn't trade it.

Dave: I want to share how I got into Art of Living. Going back a long time ago, sometime in the 90s, I was an engineering, product manager kind of guy, and one of our engineers from India, and by the way I think almost every one of the companies I worked for was founded by someone from India and of course software developers in Silicon Valley I've developed... Actually I really like the culture that I've been exposed to that way. One of the guys said, "Hey Dave, I know you're into some kind of weird stuff, you should come to this breathing thing." I'm like, "Okay." I'm a young arrogant Westerner, so I show up and there's white robes, there's flowers, little bowl of fruit, and there's this room full of people and we're all sitting on the floor and I'm like, "I'm not sure this is for me. I don't want to join a cult." Because in the West we've been programmed, especially 20 years ago, if you told someone you meditated they wouldn't take you seriously as an executive. Now it's-

Rajshree: I know what you're saying.

Dave: Yeah, so there was a little bit of a... I'm an engineering family. We're rationale, we're better than that kind of a mindset. I'm like, "Ah," and I went to the class but I never did it because it just didn't land for me. Maybe it wasn't in my language. It was in English but it wasn't in the language of my engineering brain.

Rajshree: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dave: A while later, maybe two years later the CEO, one of the best CEOs I've ever worked for, BV Jagadeesh, of the company it was called NetScaler and I'd worked with him previously at a company called Exodus. This is the company that held Google's first server, this is a really important innovator in the history of the internet. He said, "Dave, I'm going to this executive breathing thing." I didn't even know it was the same kind of thing. You should come. It's in Saratoga at this really nice house. I show up and it was the same training but the way that you taught that training was somehow different. I don't know if it was the way you explained it, but it was more about performance and more about just making your body do what you wanted.

Some of the ancient biohacking and I would say the Ayurvedic traditions, traditional Chinese medicine, ancient Buddhism, all the ancient lineages all were working on biohacking. What are the things you do that make you work better? It connected and I was like, "This is great." After that training, every day for five years I did the morning 15 minute Creo instead of breathing exercises and most Saturdays I would wake up in the middle of the night, it was 6:00 am or something, that was not a natural time for me. I would drive to BVs house and there'd be a group of maybe 20 entrepreneurs, very successful people, and we'd all go there and listen to a tape of Sri Ravi Shankar. I'm not kidding, I actually did this. Someone would lead the session and we'd all do this one hour breathing session.

When you were done it was like you did Ayahuasca or something. My friend [inaudible 00:14:22] he's like, "Dave, I can't explain why this works but I feel like I took a mental shower and my brain works better all week if I do this so I just keep showing up." I feel like I took a mental shower is a really good description, that's why I did it every day for five years because it worked. I quit doing it because I have all sorts of other breathing

technologies, and I still sometimes will do the breathing poses. I don't have a regular morning breathing practice probably because I have kids. Once you have young kids they screw up all your morning practices because they have a wake up detector. As soon as you wake up they'll wake up.

Rajshree: That's right.

Dave: You're like, "Well I was going to breath but now I'm going to play with you." But anyway, so it wasn't that I quit because it quit working, I just quit because my kids distracted me. I wanted to just share that story with listeners because you don't do something for five years unless you're getting serious benefits from it. To get to reconnect with you, to get to interview you today, and to get to read your book and write the forward it was an honor because it actually made a difference in my own path of self-awareness, which is pretty cool.

Rajshree: Well thank you, thank you for sharing that. It's interesting, going back to your earlier point. I was that left brain lawyer and there's this misnomer that if you're from India you meditate or you do yoga. Actually to your point, 20 years ago the word yoga was woo-woo. Like what are you talking about? People thought it's laying on a bed of nails or something.

Dave: Even in India you're saying or in the West?

Rajshree: Even in India.

Dave: Yes, exactly.

Rajshree: Even in India.

Dave: Only the sadhu's would do that.

Rajshree: That's right, and as a young lawyer, prosecutor I'm not interested in doing what my great-grandparents did. We didn't come to America so we sit and meditate. It has the same sort of connotation that a lot of people that you described earlier might have, well no I'm in the West and that's better than all that other stuff. When I walked in that weekend accidentally it was entirely through the left brain analysis and dissecting and judging and so on and so forth, and I remember Sri Sri at the end of the course leaning into the chair where I was sitting and saying, "Look, you've done it your way this long. The only real science is you try it and see what happens." The amazing thing for me was I went to work Monday morning and I was getting the job done in quarter the time. If it took me four hours to analyze, decipher, sort of put all my evidence and case together, interview witnesses.

I had cut it down to an hour. I was finishing my work at 3:00 in the afternoon as opposed to 7:00, 7:30 when I would drag myself out of the office because my mind had coming to a place of focus and clarity and optimizing that I hadn't known before. What happened? Just simple, extra mental chatter had settled down through this use of

breath as an exercise. It wasn't about focus, it wasn't about concentration, just use it as an exercise in a particular way and you will transform how you think, feel, and act. You optimize your mental as well as your physical dimensions of life, you're operating system. I became greedy and I went on to do more. That's how I got further involved in this.

Dave: I have on record saying that greed is why you do Art of Living?

Rajshree: Well I started that way for sure.

Dave: Not really.

Rajshree: No and perhaps today it's about wanting to really spread a message that's really needed given what's happening in the world today. I mean it's crazy out there, so yeah.

Dave: It is and it's also true. I've had the pleasure because of your training and all. To me Sri Ravi Shankar and he has 10s of millions of followers and is a guru of guru kind of guy. He sleeps two hours a night and travels all the time and has mystical powers if anyone on earth does. When you talk to him he's got that kind of unusual presence and look in his eye, and if people have had a chance to go getting a hug from the hugging saint Amma, Amma?

Rajshree: Amma yeah, Amma.

Dave: She has kind of a similar vibe, and if you meet the Panchen Lama, there's a vibe that these spiritual leaders have and you can feel it. It actually affects your energy in some way. I can imagine him leaning into you and saying, "Try something and see if it works," which is kind of obvious advice, but it was what you needed to hear as an engineer and what I needed to hear too. Just say, "I'm going to experiment all the stuff that was supposed to work. I'm still tired, I'm still anxious, I'm pissed off, and I'm fat so I got nothing to lose by trying something new."

Rajshree: Yes.

Dave: If what you're doing works then you should keep doing it, but most people are realizing that some of what they're doing isn't working because they haven't done what they wanted. You put something in your book that I want to dig in on. Because you say we've all been fed a great lie and it's that we have effort, we have to work hard and think hard in order to do or have anything great in our lives. All of the things that I've found had the biggest difference for me they seemed to make everything I do easier, including Art of Living, including breathing, including meditation in all of its forms. Why is it that we believe that we have this lie? That we have to work hard, we have to think hard, we have to struggle?

Rajshree: I guess it's a curious question. I get asked that question a lot and my answer often is it's our education systems. Somehow we're taught only to deal with the intellect. Meditation is really about the ability to perceive things as they are and our entire

education system is entirely been built on labeling and memorizing the labels. Just for a moment if I may. You know that Vedanta breaks the mental faculty or mental optimizing on three levels: perception, intellect, and memory.

When we're born we simply perceive. We could call that a state of meditation. Being present, alert, aware, tuned in, but not using the intellect, meaning analyzing, dissecting, judging, right, wrong, should we, should not we, and labeling everything. But what do we do? From the time we're one years old, parents want to give the extra edge in life and they start teaching the kids look, look, look apple, one, red, box, and we're so proud of it because all we're doing is showing them pictures and asking kids to label everything until they have it stored in their memory. Now I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it, but probably from the age of two on, all of our education is built around memorizing the labels and then re-labeling and re-memorizing and meditation, biohacking, all the things that we're talking about here, breathing and so on, is really about enhancing the quality to perceive.

To be, to see what is in front of us, taking the data in in such a way that we enter a state of flow rather than a state of conditioned response through the label and memory. I think that's the biggest challenge is that we really don't train from a young age to perceive, we simply train to label and to memorize.

Dave: That's a really profound difference, and all the teachings that I've had from the different traditions and even modern psychology and psychiatry and neuroscience and all, those three categories you have your perception can be very flawed. I know very well because I've seen it in myself and others. If there's something that's too scary to perceive you will not see it. Some part of you will edit it out of your awareness unless you've done the training to not allow that to happen.

Let's say something makes it through the filters that keep you from seeing the things that you really don't want to see like criticism or failure, stuff like that, then you have intellect. Are you willing and able to think about it and process it correctly? I'm just going to be straight forward, I do not believe that all people are created equal. Some people are smarter than others, it just happens that way and that's okay too. Maybe you have more intellect, maybe you have less. Then memory, it's also entirely possible that you won't remember some things, and especially the scary things that you didn't want to perceive in the first place.

Rajshree: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dave: How does the practice that you describe in your book, how does that fix or improve or modify any of those three behaviors around perceiving things better, processing them better, and remembering them better?

Rajshree: If I may, it's true that, going backwards a little bit, an event, fearful unpleasant event can happen that we don't remember. However, that doesn't mean it's not stored in the hard drive somewhere.

Dave: That is very true.

Rajshree: It could be stored somewhere, and then in terms of the intellect we can link it to this notion of sometimes you're working on your computer, you have a file open and maybe 10 other files open in the background that you opened a day ago, a week ago, maybe a month ago. Similarly we, as a hard drive, are currently working on a file that's in front of us. In this moment I'm talking to you, the listeners are listening to us, and yet 100 other files are open in the background and your mind, your intellect, your memory unknowingly is constantly activating them, processing them, judging analysis and the current data that's in front of us is being affected. It's slowing down our hard drive, it's creating a little less efficiency, and if there's too many files open the computer crashes, the batter gets drained.

What I'm talking about, what you learned, what we're discussing here are tools and techniques that up level the energy so much that naturally number one, we find the computer works better. You're more efficient, you're more clear, you're really working on the file that's in front of you. It's a way to close the unnecessary tabs that are open in the background that we're not aware of. Does that make sense?

Dave: It makes a lot of sense and for people who still have a computer instead of just a phone and a tablet, you might notice if you have all the tabs open the fan turns on and the batter drains more than it did before.

Rajshree: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dave: I really know, having written a book about energy production in the brain, it's the same electrons in your computer that power your brain.

Rajshree: Yes.

Dave: The source of electrons a little bit different, whether they come from food or burning coal or something, but same basic idea. If you're wasting a bunch of these with open tabs that cause your battery to be depleted in your laptop, it's not that hard to think that the same thing could be happening in your brain. That means if you get a bigger battery, you plug it in, that's called eating, or you do things that just cause you to waste less, the amount of struggle goes down. That's what comes through in your writing that a lot of people don't see, even people who are pretty darn bulletproof. People ask me this all the time Dave, "What do you struggle with the most?" I'm like, "I actually don't struggle with things. I either do them or I don't do them." I might do them and fail but-

Rajshree: That's the amazing thing. I do it or I don't do it, but most people spend time in the middle. I don't think we realize it, our biggest energy hog is our thinking frontal cortex, it's non-stop producing thoughts. I once heard Deepak Chopra say something like men have about 80,000 thoughts in eight hours and women have... I'm sorry it's the other way, 60,000 thoughts for men and 80,000 thoughts for women, emotions generate a lot more thinking. If we think that all those thoughts are useful or that we use them in day, we're so mistaken. It's all reruns just repeating itself. That is what reduces the



optimizing, and the one simple thing that people haven't necessarily always connected the dots to is the higher your energy, the less your thinking mind functions and more your intuitive insightful perceptive system kicks into gear. The less we operate from memory and the from what's in front of us, the flow.

Dave: That's a function of how much energy we have you're saying.

Rajshree: Yeah, yeah.

Dave: Now it's interesting because the way the body makes energy... Oh actually, before we even get into that, you talked about those 60,000 or 80,000 thoughts that people have. That was per minute?

Rajshree: No it's in about eight hours.

Dave: In eight hours okay.

Rajshree: Eight hours.

Dave: This is super rough non-scientific math, but I would guess that about for the average person who doesn't done much awareness work, probably 40% of the thoughts are about stuff you're anxious about, stuff that you're subconsciously afraid of, things that might be a threat. "Oh what is that person thinking about me? Does my butt look big in these jeans?" Things like that, 30% of the thoughts would be about what's for lunch I'm really hungry, what am I going to have for dinner, and should I eat that potato chip and if I do or don't am I a bad person? Then the other thoughts would be about people naked. This is based on cellular biology because this is what all animals think about. Not getting eaten, not starving, and reproducing the species. It's in there and it's mostly garbage. Then if there's anything left over in the animals or in us, it's like how do I form a biofilm, how do I be a good member of my ant colony or a member of the herd or the flock, or in our case how do I be a contributing member of society?

We worry about all the other stuff and a lot of it's swirling around, we're not that aware of it, but it sucks all that energy. When we talk about having more energy, are you talking about having more energy because you wasted less or more energy because you're actually bringing air in with these crazy breathing exercises that make... Our electrons are air plus food so is it the breathing or is it the reduction of noise that helps?

Rajshree: It's both.

Dave: Okay.

Rajshree: It's both. Look, you're walking around out there somewhere and you suddenly see on your cell phone the 10% battery light. What's the first thing you do? You want to plug in, bring in energy, but if that's not possible then you want to close the extra apps so you don't drain energy. You need to do both.

Dave: I remember there's a technique that I learned in your training and I don't remember its name, but it's when there's something that really bothers you go into a bathroom or away from people and make a fist and hold it over your head and sock yourself in the solar plexus and go hmm, what's that called?

Rajshree: There is a practice or the breathing technique, it's a quick calm breath. You don't need to sock yourself anywhere. All you really need to do is exhale through the nose with the sound hmm. As crazy as it sounds we make that sound when we can't remember something. You'll see that kids make that sound hmm after they've been upset in very simple ways. When I was in Bahia in Brazil I was watching two women struggling and fighting about something, and one of them put her hands on her hip and said, "Hmm, I've had enough and turned around and walked away." We make this sound when we're very sick in a hospital you'll notice we make the sound hmm, and this is an ancient biohack on an exhale with that sound. What you're doing is sort of sending a vibration at the pituitary gland. It calms the entire nervous system down.

Dave: I do remember there was a time going back at least a decade, I was part of a company that was having some... We basically had a layoff. This was a publicly traded company and I was a member of the senior leadership team, and I went in and I said, "You know, if we're going to get rid of one of us it should be me because I have really good people working for me and you could survive without me. I'm fine if you want to do it, but since I'm planning the layoff of the company just do me the courtesy of telling me." The answer was, "Over my dead body." I'm like okay, pretty sure I have a job. The next day they're like, "Oh yeah, you are on the list." I'm like, "What?" I was pissed.

It was just I was okay with being on the list of people who were getting let go, I was just pissed that they were deceitful about it. I went into the bathroom and did my hmm breath. I just wanted to tell anyone who knows what company that was yes I was in the bathroom going hmm and it made me feel better so there. I did learn that. I wanted you to know because I think you'd find it funny if nothing else.

Rajshree: Yeah, quick converse. I actually used it, it's a story just like yours. I did the weekend course, that's the moment when Sri Sri the master leaned in and said, "Just try it," because I found it a little ridiculous. Some weeks later, while I was in court, a new lawyer, there's a tendency for judges to initiate the new attorney and I announced a case ready and it was a gang case in Los Angeles and my witness basically disappeared in the middle of whatever goes on in a courtroom. He said, "Let's go Miss Patel," and the witness wasn't there and he started screaming at me. In my head I was really thinking, "If you were in a parking lot and I was driving I'd want to accelerate towards you." I was really furious at the insults he was throwing out. Suddenly I leaned across, the court reporter had a tissue box right there, I pulled a tissue out and I just went hmm. I did it maybe three times and I noticed that my mind steadied itself. It was as if I was looking through what was in front of me.

I was hearing him but present rather than engaged through my intellect and the judgment of myself or the situation or him for that matter. You talked about a mental shower. What I know is vital force is one of the fastest way to have mental hygiene. We spend a lot of time on physical hygiene, dental hygiene, grooming. Imagine not combing

your hair for 20 years? Who does that? Very few people do that and not pulling out the knots in your head. All the should have, would have, could have, why didn't this happen, how could it have happened, not knowing how to get out of your head is lack of hygiene and that's what we're talking about really here. Optimizing by taking short pauses, maybe 10 minutes a day in the morning if you want to or short pauses through the day, two minute pauses, to just do mental hygiene, that's all.

Dave: You talk about something else that I like in your book. You're really straightforward. You say, "People often make the mistake of classifying your work as a kind of self-help but it's not that." You're saying, "It's not that because there's nothing to fix because the Vedic tradition is that we weren't born flawed, we were born complete, powerful, connected, joyful, vibrant, and creative." I like it that this is not self-help, it's not self-improvement but you say is self-realization. Most of us in the West would say self-realization, self-improvement, self-help they're all the same thing. Why do you care if it's self-realization versus self-improvement?

Rajshree: We're talking about self-realization meaning beyond your conditioned mind, who you are. Look, when we're born we're not born flawed. We're really whole, loving, connected, thriving, confident beings. We perceive, we connect, we care, we live, we love. Then slowly, what ends up happening, is events of life normal, we learn things normal, we categorize things, we judge things, it's all normal, it's part of life, but then that becomes a veil to the core essence of who we are. A lot of self-help is about fixing the conditioned responses, the conditioned minds. What should be, what could be, what's right, what's wrong, and really Vedanta says the world is made up of opposites. Both things co-exist. The moment you get that then you've gone out of self-help into self-awareness. You've now started to enter the realm of who am I at my core, and then it's about self-optimizing, not fixing. Those are two different things.

Dave: That makes a lot of sense and the idea that you've got a lot of stuff in there and unleashing that is different than fixing, I would agree with you there. One of the things that took a little bit of adjusting for me as I was reading through the book, is you talk about Vital Force, which is the title, but there's also life force, life energy and skakti, and you're saying that they all mean the same thing in the book. Then you tie it back to the Vedic tradition. Where I'm a little bit confused, even though I'm pretty knowledgeable on this stuff, there's Vedic, there's Vedanta.

Rajshree: Vedanta.

Dave: There's prana and then of course people have talked about shakti in the same sentence will say, "I also have my chi and my chi is stuck in my second chakra." Walk me through all this language that I know I'm mixing Chinese and things.

Rajshree: It's okay, it's fine yeah.

Dave: In the West these are all in a mushy bucket. Can you draw some clear boundaries between all these things for us?

- Rajshree: Absolutely, so if I had to use... Just to stick to science for a moment, we could put all those categories into one word meaning energy. Really what is energy? In junior high school or high school we would say, "It's the ability to move." Anything that's creating momentum, movement we are calling prana or energy or chi or vital force. It's how you get it that makes a difference. When you get this energy through the breath we call it prana or chi. When we get this vital force through food, for instance, I'm not talking nutrition, I'm not talking ATP and ADP and caloric intake and carbohydrates and protein and fats, I'm talking vitality of a food. It's the unspoken thing. You get an apple, it's alive for a moment, two days, three days, whatever, if it's not been modified and so on. Three days later, four days later you see that it loses something. It's true it'll lose nutritional value but it loses vitality.
- Dave: By the way, this is why I live on a farm because you're right and food that's just picked is different. It's not a calories, it's something.
- Rajshree: It's something else, and we call that vital force. In food we would call it life force. When we're talking about movement of energy as in consciousness, intelligence versus intellect we then call it the force, the field, or vital force in a sense. If you're looking at it from metaphorically, you have white light coming in, that's consciousness field force, and then the prism, the different [inaudible 00:39:03] of the light, depending on the source of it you give it a different name.
- Dave: Okay, so I'm still not clear. Vedanta versus veves versus shakti versus chakra. Walk me through those things.
- Rajshree: Okay, so Vedanta is a system just like the Vedic system is. Vedic is a system that is in a sense much older. Vedanta is a word used in order to describe everything from yoga to this idea of Advaita, meaning oneness principle. The system of Vedanta gives us the tools, the techniques, the methodologies, the wisdom to biohack and optimize our inner life. How to be happy while we achieve whatever we have to do and want to do outside. How to enhance performance with a smile on our face rather than stress in our system. That is a system.
- Dave: Okay, so Vedanta includes yoga, meditation, inner thoughts, your emotional work and all that. It's kind of the psychology and more practice from the Hindu scriptures?
- Rajshree: Yes. It is the ancient positive psychology, if you will, that biohacks and optimizes life.
- Dave: Okay, by the way, I'm super in alignment when you talk about using this as biohacking and that might offend a traditional person from the biohacking field, given that it's all of an eight year old tradition, or a traditional person going back from an ancient lineage. I believe and it's actually in the first chapter of Super Human, every single ancient lineage that still exists today they're all working on the same thing and biohacking's a part of that, which is what are the things that you can do to live longer, be happier, perform better, and to evolve? Life evolves and it will always do it and it doesn't matter if it's human life or any other kind of life. That's what happens.

A lot of the western science that we think is so rational, when you go back, these guys were alchemists, they were trying to figure out how to be immortal and they were doing weird rituals and burning hair and God knows what else to try and figure out what worked, and they're willing to do all sort of stuff that we would think was crazy. I'm talking Francis Bacon, all the really famous western science figures, they were bat shit crazy by our modern standards because they were doing this ancient biohacking stuff based on their lineage. There is a European lineage of this stuff, and it encompasses the spiritual side, the emotional side, and the rational logical testing side.

That's why when you talk about this as ancient biohacking I'm like, "You go, that is exactly right," but I think a lot of time people are saying, "Well how can that be? It devalues the old." Or if you're super into biohacking maybe it devalues biohacking because that's ancient mystical and this stuff is science. It's all science, you just do what works and that's science. If it doesn't work great, and if you don't like the story about why it works, make up a story about DNA, great. Make up a story about leprechauns, I don't care as long as it works. We'll find out why for real later.

Rajshree: Right, well time has a way of expressing an idea in a very different way and then we sort of boo-poo it because it doesn't get expressed in the vocabulary, in the language we understand it. Talk to a Millennial of the next generation and so much of what we do seems obsolete to them. It's another mindset, it's another culture, and ancient biohacking is nothing more than a language that's different but it's working on the same thing. How is it that we're going to optimize this eight, seven different dimensions of our life? We are not just our body, our body is not inert matter, it's electric in nature, we're made up of atoms and electrons and protons, there's so much conversation in terms of even the bio, the gut, how everything is impacting everything else.

Our mind, our brain chemistry functions on electricity. It needs energy, and if you think about it what came first? It's not the carrots and it's not the potatoes. There was movement and there was vitality and there was energy and there was steady, strong, joyful presence. That is a seven, eight pound baby. It's not all matter, it's a lot of electricity in motion and it's that energy that we're talking about in anything we do. What you're talking about with Bulletproof, what I'm talking about through Vedanta is how do we maximize and access this other layer of life that we live in but haven't been taught how to use and tap into.

Dave: Let's assume that this vital force that we talk about and the title of your book and shakti, chi, whatever you want to call it, let's assume that it's real and measurable, actually it is, but a lot of people may not know that. What are the things that you can do to turn up your own vital force?

Rajshree: Couple things, one is conserve the use of vital force, which means mind getting stuck in the past, in the future, and how to bring it in the present moment. We know human beings are hard wired with the negative bias. You talked about it a little earlier, 10 positive things happen, one negative, what sticks in our head is the negative. That really drains our entire system, mind, body, emotion, spirit, every aspect of us gets drained out. That's one thing, and then the second thing is to up-level it and there's 100 different ways to do it. One of the things I talk about in the book because it's the fastest

way, there are many things I talk about in the book but one is through breath. It's an answer right under our nose. Breathing doesn't just do CO2 and O2 exchange, there is something called, you've used the word, prana. It's another word for vital force, but when entering in and out through the breath we call it prana. Qigong, when they're moving their system through the exercise they call it chi, just another language for it.

Every time you breath in you are breathing in yes, O2 to impact the cellular structure of our body, but we're also breathing in this subtle energy, which impacts the more subtle aspect of our existence, our mind, our emotions, our spirit, our essence, the joyful state if you want. Inhalation brings that in and an exhalation releases what we don't need. It is a way to detox not just a body, CO2, lactic acid, pollution, etc., but it's also a way we detox something from the mind. Remember that we're a cohesive body, mind, complex, and your breathing is a bridge between these two. It's the way we can energize the whole system, mind and body, not just the surface of the mind, frontal cortex, but also the subconscious, the unconscious, the deeper layers of the mind.

Vedanta really knows how to biohack through the breath ways to close the limbic brain files that are open. It is the way to move from sympathetic, fear, freeze, flight, stress response, which is getting stuck in the past and the future, to parasympathetic, relaxation, rest, calm, centeredness, and that's where perception is at its highest, insight, intuition, go up and conditioned response goes into the background. That is the key that we're talking about. You don't need focus, you don't need to concentrate. You were sharing the fact for the day earlier and you talked about how people find it difficult to focus on their breath and how a certain amount of time based on who you are is what your meditation practice is because some people can focus on their breath for five minutes and some other for barely two breaths.

The reason we go to meditation, number one is so that we can enhance focus and it's another thing I really discuss in the book to say if you use the breath as an exercise rather than as an instrument of attention, you up level everything with a lot less effort, including focus and concentration. It becomes a result, not the practice. It's a big difference between the two.

Dave: What about if you want to put life force into an apple that got picked a while ago or into another person who clearly is pretty much a douchebag? What do you do in those cases? Can you do that?

Rajshree: You know what? I think that our intentionality has an enormous amount in terms of how we... I'll use the word enliven. Alive versus enliven, so if you think about it, I think Joe Dispenza speaks about this a lot, it's one of the things I also talk about in the book, this notion of force as in like Star Wars or as in Matrix or as in Kung Fu Panda or as in Vital Force, it's not a mechanical inanimate thing. It's animated, it has intelligence and Max Planck spoke about this. He says, "If you want to understand the mystery of life, recognize it from the perspective of energy, vibration, frequency." Because in it there is an intelligent mind. Look at the world, I mean the planets have such intelligence, they're perfectly placed, one centimeter off the world implodes. If you look at the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom, everything has a precision to it.

Similarly, we as human beings, are part of a system and there is an intelligence that surrounds us. Our intentionality has an enormous impact on how vibrant, enlivened something is and if I may sort of go to this place I'm sure you know about the observer effect, I'm talking on the quantum realm and I don't want to put science into Vedanta. The observer effect clearly says the intentionality of the experimenter changes at the atomic level where it is. When you are observing it, it is present, when your intentionality is away it exists as potentiality, as a wave, as energy. That's what we're made up of. Our body is trillions of electrons and protons and underneath that is a quantum field, but we've never given any attention or intentionality to it.

That apple, if you have an awareness to it you change the impact of that apple on your system. I think a lot of healing today revolves around that, putting attention on it. We call it positive thinking but it's not about positive thinking on the surface level, it's from the innate, immersed level where we have an optimized outlook versus suppressing something underneath and thinking, "Oh I'm positive, I'm positive." No it just means you're negative and you're pushing things in the background.

Dave: Okay, that makes sense. You're saying I can look at the apple, provide intentionality and it's going to have more life force?

Rajshree: I think it will serve you better, that's what I'm saying. It will serve you better. If you're going to eat bad food, it's better to eat it with a positive state of mind than oh my God this is bad, why am I doing it? Then eating it anyway.

Dave: There's also this amazing thing that so many different traditions tell you to do and it's pray over your food.

Rajshree: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dave: Take a minute to be grateful for your food, say grace. I know shamans who sit there and hold their hands over their food. I've practiced those things over on and off, and there's probably something good whether you're changing the food or you're changing the way your body responds to the food I have no idea. Is it probably a beneficial practice? I would say based on my observations yeah. Based on thousands of years of people doing it and not doing it and concluding this is a best practice, it probably is. Do we know? Is it putting life force in the food? Can [inaudible 00:52:27] look at it with his x-ray vision and say, "Ah, that apple has been blessed by your gaze and therefore it has life force." Do we know that?

Rajshree: No, I don't think we know any of that, but we do know that words have a huge impact. Whether they're words in our head or words that someone else says. We carry that energy, that stress, you can use that word if you want to, within us. Someone says four little choice words put together, point a finger, and it sticks to us, we go to bed with it. Similarly this idea, what you're talking about, you sit in front of your food and you somehow calm your system down maybe because you're praying, maybe because you're inviting something greater than what's happening at that moment into your life. Maybe all we do is just rearrange, for that moment, the neurological pathways.

Neuroplasticity is not a metaphysics conversation, it's actual physics and neuroscience. Lifestyle, our thought process, how we eat, what we eat, when we eat, how we interrelate, how we connect, has a direct impact on who we become physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Dave: That matches my experience entirely, and I think you do a great job in Vital Force of explaining that, that subtle difference. I still struggle a little bit, even though I don't really like struggling, we'll put it this way. There's still a question in my mind about how much of this is oh it's placebo or I'm convincing myself that if I think positive thoughts about my food before I eat it oh it's going to do more things to me. I'll be the first to... I don't always do that. I put love into the coffee beans that I create. I put intentionality into those things, a lot of it.

But there are times when I sit down, I'm at an airport or I'm opening [inaudible 00:54:26], I know when we made the bar I did something but when I opened it and ate it I might have just been on the phone and walking and I really didn't take a minute to bless my food, in fact I usually don't. I still question that, how important, how often, and I don't know that there ever will be a perfect answer to that or a best practice. When I feel the urge I'll do it and when I don't I don't, and I'm kind of okay either way. What would the Vedanta teaching about that be?

Rajshree: I think Vedanta would say it isn't about a positive thought or a negative thought. It would just simply say it's really about being there with what's in front of you. You could talk about it from a perspective of being aware, or mindful, and what it's saying is if you have negative emotions, if there's a lot of negative thinking going on, they're going to say it simply means you're nervous system is tired, it depleted of energy, vital force. All you need to do is give the mind some rest and you will up level that vital force and you'll naturally, naturally, without trying or doing, move towards a positive state of mind, a positive outlook. Look, a simple question Dave is when you're tired, when you didn't sleep well because sleep is one of the ways we up level vital force. We give the body rest and we up level vital force. This organic bio energy, that's what we're talking about here.

If you don't sleep well for two days, the third day you notice that everything seems a little more difficult. The struggle increases, your outlook becomes less positive, more negative. People we love become, God I need a break from you today. We still love them, all that's happened is we've become depleted of vitality. Vedanta would say up level vitality and you will naturally become a more loving, present, kinder human being. They're not asking you to put mental effort, and that's why what you brought up earlier about hard work and all of that, is a big lie. We don't need to work as hard when we're energetic. We work very hard and struggle and go uphill when we're running on empty, and that's what most people are doing, running on empty.

Dave: Very well put. I think it's hard in one hour to talk about the depths of all of the stuff that people learn if they spend a couple days going deep on the breathing exercises or awareness exercises and things like that. It's one of those things that really did make a difference for me in learning how to be more aware and more present. It's worth the time and the investment in doing that, and by stacking awareness with breathing



exercises I think there's added impact and it's also a time saver. Just by doing them together it saves you energy.

I have one further question for you as we come up on the end of the interview. I just wrote a book about living to at least 180 because actually if you look back through the ancient Hindu writings, there's people who have done that before.

Rajshree: Actually you know how we celebrate 50 years in this country as the middle big birthday?

Dave: Yeah.

Rajshree: It still goes on, the practice particularly in the south of India, they celebrate 60 because the average lifespan in ancient times was 120. When someone turns 60 it is a huge birthday because that's considered the middle of your life cycle. That was just 3,000, 4,000 years ago. If you look at scriptures older than that we lived much longer, much longer.

Dave: In fact there's some crazy stuff out there that I've come across that goes through the entire set of recorded history from multiple histories. Anywhere there's evidence, looking at a relative decline from 800 years, to 400 years, to 200 years, to 100 years based on linear progression that matches from different parts of the world that presumably weren't talking to each other. I mean we could go really into interesting biochemistry and four potential reasons that that would be happening, but how would we know if 2,000 years ago people lived a certain amount of time? We see it written down and we just say, "Oh they were lying." They also said they had giants and dragons.

Rajshree: Who knows.

Dave: Right, but my question for you is this. How long do you think you're going to live? I mean you've done all the altered states exploration. I know 180 because of math. I don't know if I'm going to actually live that long or longer. I just think it's possible and that's my intention. I had my 25% birthday just happened. What's your number? Is it 60.

Rajshree: I don't think I have a number. I'm 58 now, and for me what's very important is that it's not how long I live, it's how I live. There are a lot of people who are 90 something years old or 20 something years old and you'd be surprised that the 20 year old is walking around on autopilot, basically a zombie, not really vibrant, not alive, not going forward, not risking, not connecting, just somehow managing to get through what they have to, playing it safe in life. It's a question I ask. You may or may not remember it from the book but I ask people, "Are you committed in your life and choose because you're committed to being happy A, or are you committed an making choices in your life because you want to make sure you're not unhappy, something uncomfortable doesn't happen?"

We like to think we're A, but most people are in B category and if what you're talking about and what you're asking is committed to living out of the A zone. I'm committed,

I'm going to live, I'm alive, and I think that makes us also live more years, not just how well we live but how long we live, both together.

Dave: Very well put. Rajshree Patel, your new book is Vital Force and you certainly are a vital force or maybe a guided missile of meditation as you've just been named.

Rajshree: I loved it.

Dave: Thank you for being on Bulletproof Radio today. Thank you for writing Vital Force. If you're listening to the show and you're saying, "I don't know if I should read this or not." I'll just tell you I get a lot of invitations to write forwards for books, I mean a lot. Way more than I could possibly fulfill and still have a life. But I did choose to write the forward for Vital Force because it's a book worth reading. I would highly encourage you to read it.

Like always, if you leave a tip for your barista at the Bulletproof Coffee Shop or if you cheat on me and you go to some other coffee shop and leave them a tip too that's good, but if you do that do the same thing for an author and the way you leave a tip for an author it's free. You just go to Amazon and leave a review. You can just give it some stars, you can make a one sentence comment, and I'm telling you because I know, Rajshree is going to look at those reviews and see how well did I do. I look at reviews on my books. Take the time to read Vital Force and leave a review for it and it'll make you a better person in both of those acts. Have a wonderful day.