



A MODERN
QUEST

FOR ETERNAL
TRUTH

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A Modern Quest For Eternal Truth

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Chapter Twenty-Seven

KUMUDA GUMP

PEOPLE HAVE OCCASIONALLY ASKED ME, sometimes with a bit of judgment, how I could have left a peaceful monastic ashram life and jumped so fully into Hollywood. Some have acted as though I must have given up on my spiritual life, when in fact I was just following the instructions of my guru as part of my spiritual journey. Therefore, it is understandable that I would strive to do well and fit in wherever I was.

One element of the monastic mindset is to accept whatever you are given and to willingly do whatever God, the Universe, or in the case of the ashram, whatever your guru or the service desk ask you to do.

I had been spiritually prepared to move my journey outside of the ashram, because one of the teachings of my gurus was to see God in the world. This was one of my guru's main teachings. It was based in part on the ancient philosophy of *Kashmir Shaivism*, a fairly scientific view of how everything in the universe is made up of supreme Consciousness. From that perspective, one should be able to experience the divine "Play of Consciousness," anywhere, including Hollywood, where Muktananda had also spent time giving programs, meeting celebrities, and being interviewed on various news and entertainment television shows in the early 1980s.

I was also somewhat comfortable with the Hollywood scene, because our ashram had been popular with celebrities. Superstars like Barbara Streisand would usually come only for pre-arranged private meetings with our guru away from the crowds, but many other celebrities would come and join in the ashram schedule — meditating, chanting, and serving with the rest of us, though generally with closer seats and somewhat fancier, though still simple, rooms.

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Most devotees were so enthralled with our gurus that we weren't as excited about celebrities as others might be. For many of us who were deeply embracing the devotional path of *bhakti yoga*, there was our guru, and then there was everybody else (who from a higher perspective were also forms of the Universal Guru).

Most ashram residents didn't watch television shows or movies, so we often didn't even recognize famous people. One long-term ashram resident told me that she was eating lunch at a group table in the dining hall one day with actor William Hurt at the same table.

When the woman asked what he did for a living, Academy Award winner William replied that he was an actor. She then asked if he had been in anything she might have seen, which actually may have been refreshing for William to hear as he delved into his deeper spirit beyond fame while visiting the ashram.

Another time, I was visiting the ashram soon after drinking peppermint schnapps and chatting with Arnold Schwarzenegger on that Thanksgiving evening.

Anjali, a very sweet longtime resident, came up to say hello, and as we chatted, she asked if I'd met any celebrities in Hollywood.

"Yes, quite a few," I happily responded.

"Who have you met?" Anjali eagerly asked.

"Well, just a couple months ago, I spent Thanksgiving with Arnold Schwarzenegger!"

Anjali asked, "Is he famous?"

I chuckled and thought, "Why did you even ask?" Of course, just a few years earlier, I probably wouldn't have known who he was either.

My favorite celebrity moment in the ashram took place during one of John Denver's visits. As a teen, I had greatly enjoyed John Denver's music, which, along with the music of Cat Stevens, really stood out in the musical landscape as being melodically appealing, pure, heartfelt, and uplifting to the mind, heart, spirit, and world.

John loved Baba Muktananda tremendously, and announced during one evening program that he had written the song "Perhaps Love" to express his love for Baba.

John performed several times in our meditation halls for both Muktananda and Gurumayi. He was also close friends with famed architect, author, and futurist Buckminster Fuller, and considered both Fuller and Muktananda to be his mentors.

During Muktananda's visit to Los Angeles in 1981, John had arranged for "Bucky" Fuller and Muktananda to meet privately, and it was a meeting filled with big smiles, wonderful conversation, and a loving exchange of gifts.

This meeting had been videotaped, and I'd watched it many times while working on various projects as the ashram's video editor. I thought John would really enjoy seeing this video, especially with both of his beloved mentors having passed on.

I invited John to my edit bay to show him the footage of this joyful meeting, and he was as wonderful, gracious, sweet, and thrilled as I would have expected him to be.

After moving from the ashram to Los Angeles, I didn't really go out of my way to meet or help create famous people, but like Forrest Gump, I often found myself in amazing situations, some of which would come to light years later.

During my seven years in Hollywood, I met, worked with, learned from, and helped quite a few nonfamous, famous, soon-to-be-famous, and one or two infamous people to achieve greater success in their careers.

One definition of "Guru" is "the grace bestowing power of God," a power I'd come to know very well while living in the ashram, and also while stepping into Hollywood.

This grace bestowing energy seemed to come together with my general intention to live in a way that was of service, and from this combination arose an ability to help others to envision, connect, and find their way into better jobs, and sometimes on to new career paths.

My first incidence of this magical touch came just a few weeks after I moved to Hollywood. I had been hired to edit a music video on editing equipment I'd never used before, which was quite a frightening scenario. But this was my first job offer, and I wasn't about to turn it down.

On the day of our editing session, I decided to follow the more scenic directions from Santa Monica to the valley through Malibu, while feeling some trepidation about having had the chutzpah to agree to edit a video on equipment I didn't even know how to use. At the same time, I was excited to have my first post-ashram job.

While driving through miles of woodsy back roads, I looked over to see the edge of what looked like a fancy Hindu temple. It couldn't be!

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I had to turn the car around to see what it was, and drove into the parking lot of a large Hindu temple complex filled with statues of many of my favorite deities. I only had time to hop in for a few minutes, but after that good omen surprise, I felt protected and nearly worry-free.

I arrived at the studio early and found the previous editor cleaning up after his session. I boldly asked the editor if he might be able to give me a quick overview of the equipment, and like an angel sent from heaven, he generously agreed. David spent nearly a half-hour showing me how to use the system, and I was ultimately able to edit and complete the video to the director's satisfaction. As a statement of faith and gratitude, I forwarded my entire check from this first project to my guru's foundation. It would be the first of many offerings of love from my new career in Hollywood.

A couple months later, I received a call from the ashram. It turns out that Ralph, who had apparently orchestrated my removal from the ashram's video department, was already becoming active as the ashram's new filmmaker. In Ralph's mind, he was Fellini, Bertolucci, and Spielberg all in one, as he set about to produce a video view of our path's Indian ashram, which was beautiful, exotic, and filled with exquisite and interesting plants, grounds, history, practices, statues, temples, foods, and people.

Ralph brought in all kinds of fancy Bollywood cranes and dollies that could pan through the air and get more exotic shots. He had various ashram residents perform scenes over and over to film them walking, chanting, or practicing yoga, until the scene was just right. But now they needed an editor who would come to India and edit this masterpiece. I had recently moved to Los Angeles, so the ashram phoned and asked if I knew of any good video editors who might be willing to come to India for six months to work on this project.

Of course, I wanted to suggest myself, but knew that wasn't going to happen. None of the few editors I'd met seemed like even remotely possible candidates for this project, so I said that I didn't know of anyone to recommend, but that I'd keep my eyes open.

While chanting the next morning, a face flashed on my mind's screen. It was that fellow David, the editor who had so kindly showed me how to use the equipment for my first video editing job. It was strange for me to have someone's face pop up like that. I thought that maybe I should try to get his contact info and see if he might be interested in spending half a year editing at an ashram in India. My hopes weren't too high, but why not ask?

I sleuthed out David's phone number, and called him with the possible job. David shared with me that his heart's desire was to make music — he had a small band, but wasn't able to make a living from it, so he did the editing jobs to support himself and his musical aspirations.

In hopes of convincing David to consider the job, I told him, "You'd find lots of great music in the ashram — every day they have hours and hours of different kinds of chanting with Indian instruments and ancient raga melodies."

This sparked David's interest, and after some negotiations with the ashram management, he did go to India to edit the video, and then stayed beyond the six months. While there, David Stringer also discovered his love for Indian chanting, and in subsequent years became one of the more famous and traveled singers of group kirtan chanting, bringing the joy of singing God's name — one of our guru's main gifts and practices — to people around the world.

Soon after arriving in Hollywood, I purchased a list of media company addresses and sent a batch of my meager but nicely designed resume packets to various studios and production companies, including places where I probably wouldn't have a chance of being hired. One of these recipients was Alan Funt, the creator and host of "Candid Camera," a television show that began in the late 1940s.

I'd grown up watching Candid Camera, which revealed a great deal about human nature by placing people in funny, challenging, or ridiculous predicaments to see how they would respond. Alan was in his mid-seventies by this time, and still producing occasional specials.

Seeing Alan Funt's address in the media list, I thought there was no way he would ever hire me. I imagined that he'd probably been using the same editor for the past forty years.

Nevertheless, I decided to mail resumes to him and a few other seemingly impossible places as an offering to the winds of destiny and the Will of God. It wasn't my place to limit the possibilities, and this was my way of making a statement to the universe that I was open and willing to get a good job.

A few weeks later, while working as a free-lance editor for the show *Hard Copy*, I received a phone call from none other than Alan Funt himself. Alan spoke with a very thick New York accent as he asked about my resume.

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“I see you’ve been editing in New York for years.” This was technically true, since the ashram where I lived and edited videos was in upstate New York. “But have ya cut comedy?”

I put on my best tough New Yorker affectation and responded, “Alan, I’ve edited in New York for years; I’ve cut everything.”

This statement was also technically true, because in the ashram, I’d produced and edited all kinds of videos, including many comedy pieces. In fact, during one summer, our video department was asked by our guru to create a “Candid Seva” video for one of the ashram courses that was meant to bring a deeper understanding and experience of “selfless service.”

The video crew went out and set up all kinds of hidden camera situations to provoke people and see if they would react angrily, but in general, the surrendered devotees accepted these challenges without too many complaints.

We edited what we could from these disappointing efforts and sent the sample tape to our guru, who responded by sending the message, “You don’t know how to do Candid Camera right.”

And here I was in Los Angeles just a few years later, with Alan Funt himself phoning to interview me as a possible editor. I especially wanted to work for him because of our guru’s comment. Alan hired me on the phone and asked me to come to work at his in-home studio the next week.

When I excitedly told some people at Hard Copy about my call from Alan Funt, they immediately said, “Don’t take the job!”

Apparently Alan had a reputation for being grouchy and firing editors quickly. But I wasn’t about to turn down a chance to work with this legend and learn how to do Candid Camera right. I could handle a little grouchiness — I’d been through Ralph at the ashram!

For the next month and a half, I worked with Alan on a show called “Funny Money,” and was told that I was the first editor to make it through a whole show with him in a long time. Alan did yell a lot, but fortunately not at me.

I would often feel concerned about Alan’s health, as he’d blow up at some of the production staff, turning bright red while shouting. This was a little different from the usual charming Alan Funt I had watched while growing up, but I still liked him and felt that we had a special connection from the first time I walked into his living room.

Before we even introduced ourselves, Alan had motioned for me to sit next to him, and said, “Watch this.”

On came a video clip of a dog being fitted for a jeweled necklace per his deceased owner's last will and testament. This was meant to be a gag on the jeweler, but the jeweler seemed too excited about making a big sale to risk it by questioning the scenario, so it ended up being more a study of the jeweler kissing up to the dog and the dog's attendant, which was interesting for about thirty seconds of the ten-minute video.

After the piece ended, Alan turned to me and gruffly said, "Ya didn't laugh."

My reply to his statement set the stage for a very good and respectful working relationship between us. With my usual innocent honesty, I said, "Well Mr. Funt, that's not because I don't have a good sense of humor." From then on, Alan insisted that I had to approve every piece before it could be included in the show. Here I was, just a couple months out of the ashram, and I was editing and helping to produce a Candid Camera special with Alan Funt in his house!

During my first two years in Hollywood, I also played a role in helping Charlie Rose, subsequently of the "Charlie Rose Show" and "CBS This Morning," to find his greater destiny.

About a year into my full-time job with Disney's "Prime Nine News," I was offered a free-lance job on the side, film editing for a new television show called "Personalities." The producers wanted to duplicate Hard Copy's style and success, so they were especially interested in hiring an editor like me, who had actually worked on Hard Copy.

The host of this new show was very talented; he was Charlie Rose, who has since become famous as one of media's great interviewers. But at the time, Charlie wasn't well known, and therefore had been hired to anchor this second-rate tabloid show. Charlie's job was to introduce stories on camera, and to produce some of the pieces.

One day, I was scheduled to work with Charlie to edit an interview he had just filmed with Bob Hope. It was a great interview, with about an hour of raw taped footage that we had to cut down to five minutes. Actually the whole hour was great. Bob was sharing personal stories and tossing out one-liners, as young Charlie encouraged him with laughter. The interview was filmed with two cameras, so I was able to cut back and forth to match the pace and enhance the viewer's experience of this conversation.

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Editing just five-minutes from this hour-long interview meant cutting out a lot of good stories and moments. Charlie and I watched through and selected which parts of the interview to keep, and put together a very nice five-minute piece.

We sent in the final edit to one of the executives in charge, who was very interested in keeping the show fast-moving and tabloidesque.

The executive sent a message back saying that five minutes was too long. We would have to cut this great interview down to just two and a half minutes. “We have to keep the show moving fast, fast, fast.”

Charlie was understandably upset with this edict. He immediately said, “I’ll take care of this,” and ran off to talk the executive producer out of cutting the piece down any further. After all, Charlie was the show’s on-camera host, so you’d think the executive producer would have placated his wishes for something so minor.

But no, the exec was firm — we had to cut this fabulous hour-long interview down to just two and a half minutes.

Charlie looked close to tears as he came back to the editing bay. He was clearly feeling emotional distress about being the face of such a schlocky enterprise. I agreed that it was a shame to chop something so fabulous down to just a few sound bites to make room for one more insipid tabloid story.

In that moment, I believe Charlie was so upset that his vulnerability opened him up to a deeper layer of his soul. Emotional moments can sometimes trigger major life transformations, and I got to be part of Charlie’s when his happened.

One ability I’ve had is to sometimes glimpse possible potentials or destinies of what kinds of works and endeavors people could do that would be a good use and powerful expression of their styles and talents. I don’t know if these impressions are always right, but some have come to successful fruition in people’s careers.

Even though Charlie and I had only recently met, we’d had a good creative working relationship, especially while editing this interview. It seemed as though the shock and anger Charlie was feeling had opened him up beyond his usually stoic demeanor, a change I could see in his face.

We started talking on a soul-to-soul level, as though we were old, caring friends.

I told Charlie that this tabloid show was clearly the wrong kind of format for him, and suggested that the Bob Hope interview was so entertaining that it could easily have stood on its own as a full show. I wondered if Charlie could create and sell a simple hour-long interview show that would be similar to the full Bob Hope interview. “People would love to watch some good, intelligent conversations with celebrities and newsmakers.”

Charlie agreed and asked me to come back to the FOX studio with him on Saturday to edit a demo video of his full hour-long interview with Bob Hope that he could use to pitch a new interview show. Even though we both worked at the studio, I tend to say we “snuck in,” because our mission to get Charlie a new reel had to be done behind closed doors, with some fudging on what we said we were there to do.

Within a few weeks, Charlie was gone. I heard a rumor that he had gotten a new show, but didn’t communicate again with Charlie until more than a decade later, when Bob Hope passed. By then, the “Charlie Rose Show” had become a successful staple on public television, and I sent an email to let him know that I still had the short version of his old Bob Hope interview, also reminding him of our story. Charlie enthusiastically responded and asked me to send the tape to him so he could copy and then return it. Charlie also said that he was going to show the clip on his show and tell our story of how his show first came to be, but I didn’t see that show if he did.

Charlie Rose's story is proof that we never know what grace may be waiting behind even our most upsetting challenges, if we're alert enough to catch ourselves, seize the moment, and act from the space of deep soul Self that is often hidden beneath the waves of daily life.

That deep Self is sometimes a bit more accessible during times of intense emotion. As we cry out and ask the universe for help or guidance on what to do, the veil of mediocrity can lift to reveal a possible new destiny.

In that state is the Spanda principle (the energy of divine creative pulsation) firmly established to which a person is reduced when he is greatly exasperated or overjoyed, or is in impasse reflecting what to do, or is running for life.

— SPANDA KARIKAS, 1:22

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I experienced quite a few of my own career mini-miracles as well. Soon after leaving the ashram, I met someone who had won an Emmy Award, and thought, “How great it would be to win an Emmy award and bring it back to my guru in the darshan line as a gift and trophy!”

With this thought came a visual image of wrapping the golden Emmy award in red velvet and offering it to Gurumayi, saying, “This really belongs to you.”

I had this Emmy award vision just before I started working for Disney’s KCAL-TV as a full-time editor and occasional producer. It turns out that there’s hardly a better way to win an Emmy award than to work for the news, since each region has an Emmy Award competition. With our TV station in the Los Angeles market, my pieces would be eligible to win a Los Angeles Emmy award, which was considered to be nearly as prestigious as a national Emmy.

Two pieces that I edited during my first year after leaving the ashram were nominated for Emmy awards, but I didn’t win. The next year, I had a near-record four nominations, and finally won with the last of the four. The Emmy ceremony took place just a week or so before my Guru’s birthday celebration in upstate New York, which I was already scheduled to attend. I flew to the ashram with my Emmy wrapped in red velvet, ready to bring my vision to life.

While moving forward in the long *darshan line*, I was feeling shy about speaking to my guru, as usual. At times, I had barely been able to even properly answer my guru’s questions — she once described me during a public talk as being “reticent.”

I think there are probably a few explanations for this tendency toward reticence in my guru’s presence. One is that my mind and heart would become so united when I was before her energy and consciousness that my waves of thought would calm and settle down into a greater field of awareness that was not conducive to forming and speaking words. Another explanation was that I was probably afraid I might put my foot in my mouth and say the wrong thing.

During a previous visit to the ashram, I had purchased a box of top quality Belgium chocolates to bring back to my co-workers at Disney, hopefully with the guru’s blessing. Usually I was too shy to ask or initiate many conversations with her, but this was for the hundred or so people I’d been working with on so many creative projects. I wanted to share some of this path’s blessing with them.

Holding the box of candies in a shawl while kneeling before my guru in that previous darshan line, I had been unable to recite my planned request about wanting to bring blessings back to my co-workers at Disney, and had barely managed to eke out the words, "Please bless the candy."

Although I'd felt a bit foolish for giving such an abridged request, a blessing was nevertheless showered upon those chocolates. While sitting on a chair in the back of the room with that shawl-covered box on my lap, it became so hot that it was difficult to continue holding the bundle. This must sound strange, but it was a very tangible and almost painful experience of holding something that was very hot.

When I returned to the newsroom after my ashram stay, I walked in to find almost everyone there in a generally somber mood, with no smiles to be found. Even with friends welcoming me back, there was a low energy quality pervading the room.

It seemed like a great time to bring a blessing, so I went person by person and gave each one a chocolate, telling them that it had been blessed by my guru.

Although I felt a little shy going full out with the guru blessing part of the chocolate gifts, by that time, I had proven myself enough as an editor and reasonably centered person to get away with saying something that was quite unusual, especially at that place and time.

The executives, writers, producers, anchors, and reporters around the newsroom were generally respectful while receiving their blessed candy. Only our most curmudgeonly reporter made fun of the gesture, but even he still accepted his delicious Belgium chocolate.

Feeling relieved at having gotten past my reticence to complete this chocolate blessing request and distribution task, I headed upstairs to my editing bay to start piecing together news stories for that evening's newscasts.

About an hour later, I brought a tape down to the newsroom, and wow, it was an entirely different vibe. Everyone was laughing with bright smiles. The room was filled with positive energy. The flavor I remember of that moment almost reminds me of a party with beach balls flying here and there, although they were still at work. As I stood looking around and hearing peals of laughter ringing out from various parts of the room, I felt shocked although not necessarily surprised by this shift.

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One of the writers shouted out, “Hey Sharon, what was in those chocolates!?” Others asked if they could get seconds of the blessed candy, and one of the producers held up her wrapper and said she was going to save it.

Now, a year or so later, I was back in the darshan line, preparing to offer my newly won Emmy award to the guru. This time, I wanted to get it right and not become tongue-tied before her as I had many times before.

I practiced my script: “Gurumayi, when I first left the ashram, I had a vision that one day I'd bring you an Emmy award wrapped in red velvet and give it to you, saying, 'This really belongs to you.' So I'm here today to say that this really belongs to you.” At that point I would unwrap the red velvet cloth and hand the Emmy award to her.

I gave myself a stern lecture about coming through for myself this time, and as I bowed before my guru, was pleased to be able to successfully say the words, unwrap the red velvet cloth, and hand the Emmy award to my guru, according to plan.

She received my offering with a smile, held it for a few moments, and showed it around to the folks gathered there, saying, “Look, Kumuda won an Emmy.” Then she handed the statue back to me saying, “You should keep it,” which I somewhat reluctantly did.

Now I shouldn't leave out the Kumuda Gump trivia fact that I had an interesting chat with Johnny Depp in his movie trailer. My close friend and roommate at the time was playing the sultan's favorite wife opposite Johnny Depp in *Don Juan De Marco*, and Jo brought me into his trailer on set to introduce us before filming their harem scene.

I entered the trailer and saw Johnny playing cards shirtless, with harem-style makeup on his face, looking exceptionally beautiful.

After Jo introduced us, Johnny kept insisting that we had met before. I thought, “Not unless you've been to the ashram,” but was pretty sure he hadn't been one of the celebrities to mix with everyone at the ashram. I assured Johnny that we had not met, at least not in this lifetime.

I also worked with quite a few journalists who would find their way into various national media markets, including Jane Velez Mitchell who went on to host her own show on CNN's Headline News network.

Several times, I edited local sports with Keith Olbermann, who eventually went on to greater fame at ESPN, MSNBC, and other media outlets.

I was not the ideal person to be editing sports, knowing almost nothing about any games. Keith seemed like someone who could be demanding to work with, but since I was only there to substitute for his usual editor, he showed great patience when I barely even knew which sport we were editing, much less that “cut to the glory” meant to show a close-up of whomever had just made the successful play.

During these Hollywood years, many of my friends were in the television business. In Los Angeles, all you had to do was go out for a meal, and you might be waited on by a scriptwriter or actor waiting for their big break.

Producers, directors, casting directors, actors, and all kinds of film industry crew would also attend chants and programs at my guru’s Santa Monica meditation center. I’d leave the hall after our Shree Guru Gita chant, and have nice hugs with various friends, including Bea Marcus, the original “I’ve fallen and I can’t get up” elderly actress, who had the sweetest smile and a heart of gold.

After leaving Disney, I edited and co-produced the B-movie “Beretta’s Island” with Arnold Schwarzenegger’s best friend Franco, and then did freelance work for various projects and studios, including editing many news stories and news features at KCBS in Hollywood, before I was ready to find another full-time job.

But first I would have another visit to the ashram, and an opportunity to bathe in the guru’s “grace bestowing power” before stepping into whatever would be next for me in Hollywood. I went into the temple and looked at the statue of our grandfather guru.

I usually just said, “Thank you,” or repeated a mantra while bowing to his silver sandals, but this time I prayed for the right job, asking, “Please put me where I should be.”

Soon after going back into the main ashram, I walked by a bank of payphones and decided to phone home to check my messages. After all, you never know how quickly the answer to a prayer can come.

And lo and behold, there was a message from an assistant editor I had met a couple times, telling me that if by chance I was looking for a job, he had heard there was an opening for an editor on a brand new children’s television show called the “Mighty Morphin’ Power Rangers,” which was set to debut in the fall.

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The assistant explained that this show was only scheduled to run for one season — in fact, the owner of the production company, Haim Saban, had been trying to get television stations to give the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers show a try for years. Finally, the head of FOX Children’s network decided to give it a chance for one season. One season or not, it sounded like interesting work, and seemed to have appeared in response to my prayer.

I met the show’s producer and viewed some of their delightful Japanese-designed characters. The show was like a live action cartoon — it was “eye candy” for children that also aspired to give good morals along with the fights and battles.

Power Rangers eventually became the number one children’s television show in history, playing a role in sparking more interest in martial arts for young people, and raking in billions of dollars through a shocking number of tie-in products. For years, it was a top selling Halloween costume, with toys galore, including figures of the power ranger kids and villains and the super Megazord.

One Christmas season, parents across the land were trying to get the Green Dragonzord for their kids, but production had stalled, and there weren’t any left on any store shelves anywhere in the country.

It was impossible to get a Dragonzord, but somehow as editor of the show, I was able to procure one. I brought the Dragonzord as a perhaps symbolically intriguing gift to my guru — it was certainly an unusual offering.

Knowing how all the events at the ashram seemed to weave intricate patterns with everyone’s karmas, aspirations, and even seemingly mundane wishes, I could imagine a child receiving this impossible to find Dragonzord from our guru and thinking, “Wow, she must really be God!”

The president of Saban once told me that our company earned more just from the sale of Power Rangers sneakers than from all the worldwide distribution of the television show. While editing Power Rangers, I was also hired to train the producers of NBC’s national promos on how to use their Avid editing system.

After I’d edited one of the first feature films using their system, the Avid company recommended me to NBC. NBC was happy to hire me for a good rate, but their producers were not happy. They were used to directing the editing process and having professional editors make just the right cuts.

So the producers would usually convince me to edit their promos for shows including *Seinfeld* and *Frazier*, while showing little interest in learning how to do it themselves.

That job was a little flexible, since it depended on the producers' schedules, and my job editing the Power Rangers also had some flexibility, so somehow I was working two full-time jobs at the same time, right down the block from each other. Neither place knew about the other; it was like having a "job mistress" on the side.

Once the first season of Power Rangers was edited and starting to broadcast on FOX Children's' Network, one of the executives at Saban asked if I would like to edit their other very popular animated show called "X-Men," which was a precursor to the popular X-Men movie series that would begin seven years later.

This executive who hired me for the job told me that the guys I'd be working with were "real assholes," which was a strange thing to hear when being invited to take a job. But when I met the producer, he was a lovely and intelligent person, with such a great smile that he and his wife had once been the couple in a Close-Up toothpaste commercial.

My other co-worker for X-Men was a vice president of Fox Children's' Network, who was very appropriately named Sidney Iwanter, pronounced, "I want her." Sidney was very intelligent and creative, although nearly every time we went out to eat during an editing session, he would flirt with the waitress or whatever nice looking women were around.

Sidney also had a quirky and self-depreciating sense of humor that helped him to write some of Wolverine's great dialogue in the shows. Once an old friend from the ashram came to visit me at the studio, and went out to eat with Sidney and I. As usual, he was flirting with her, but this time in a way that seemed to hold more promise for him.

After my friend left, Sidney exclaimed, "Could you feel the sexual chemistry between us?"

I looked at him pointedly, and said with a long drawl, "No."

"Don't tell me she's a lesbian!"

"Bingo!"

A month or two after I'd completed work on the first season of Power Rangers and started working on X-Men, FOX realized that this Power Rangers show was going to be a hit and signed on for more seasons.

A MODERN QUEST FOR ETERNAL TRUTH

I was editing with the X-Men producer when Haim Saban, the owner of this production company and a soon-to-be billionaire, came in to my editing bay and said to the producer, "You can't have her anymore. We need her for Power Rangers. She's the only one who understands the show."

I chuckled. Haim had been born in Egypt before his family moved to Israel. He had a humorous way of saying things, with a flavor and accent that reminded me very much of Ralph back at the ashram. In fact, Haim looked like he could have easily been Ralph's brother.

When Haim would see me in the halls, he'd say things like, "There's that lousy editor," and I would know it was his way of saying that I was an especially good editor.

I had recently stopped working on that second temporary full-time job with NBC promos, so told Haim, "I can edit both shows." After ten years in the ashram, I was used to working steadily. Socializing wasn't of much interest to me, so I had time to fit in many interesting projects during those years. It would be even easier to edit both X-Men and Power Rangers, because at least they could be edited in the same room at the same company.

Then, in spite of my usually unsavvy business skills, I added, "But you'll have to pay me twice."

Haim squinted his eyes, "That's a lot of dollars."

I replied, "That's a lot of hours," and he agreed.

The next year, when the associate producer of X-Men left to produce another show, I also became the associate producer as well as editor of X-Men, while still working as a full-time editor for Power Rangers.

At the time, these were the number one and two shows in children's television history. I was basically working two and a half full-time jobs for the same company, and after I eventually left, I was told that the company replaced me with one part-time and two full-time employees.

At one point while still working on both shows, I was asked to design and edit a music video with scenes from the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers television show, not as an extra project but as part of my usual work for the company. The song was based on the show's theme song, "Go Go Power Rangers," with a few extra guitar licks and other touches. The new version of this song had been produced for Atlantic Records by an unknown music producer in England.

I never met this producer, but found out about the fellow years later while reading some of his autobiography and hearing him speak on the Ellen Degeneres Show.

This producer's first projects in the music business had not succeeded, leaving him penniless and living with his parents. He had the idea to produce a more rock 'n' roll version of the Power Ranger's theme song for public release, and had a friend who could arrange for a music video based on the song to play on the popular United Kingdom show, "Top of the Pops." This unknown, penniless music producer's name was Simon Cowell.

A director who worked with Atlantic records flew over from England with the music track. The fellow was supposed to work with me, but he wasn't familiar at all with the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers show, so he basically sat for several days gleefully applauding while I found the shots and did my editing magic.

This director was so thrilled with the video that he said he would give me an additional credit as co-director, since I designed the video, although I never heard from the director or Simon again.

But that was fine with me. My experiences at the ashram had taught me to not get too carried away with receiving credit or specific benefits for the works that the creative energy allowed me to be a vehicle for creating.

Although I had delved a little more into the Hollywood mentality of winning awards, I still aspired to stay free from too many concerns about outer accolades of this world.

Beneath all the outer work and accomplishments was a simple wish to follow my guru's command in a way that could be a blessing for my journey, my guru's work, and the world.

For me, this Power Rangers music video was a great reverie to do. I loved editing to music, and especially enjoyed an opportunity to use all the colorful and exciting footage from the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers series archive. The song was good too.

A few weeks after completing this music video, I heard that it had shown several times to great acclaim on England's "Top of the Pops" television show.

In fact, that Power Rangers song became so popular that it amazingly shot up to number three on England's charts.

Simon Cowell made a lot of money from this song's success, and the rest is history, eventually leading to American Idol and his other endeavors.

A MODERN QUEST FOR ETERNAL TRUTH

I feel fortunate to have been able to play a part in helping to spark the success of many people, such as this man who sparked the careers of so many great musical artists. Since I worked on the video with Simon's representative who flew over from England, Simon and I didn't personally meet, but in subsequent years, I would enjoy his works with a special smile.

These Hollywood years brought many other circumstances where I was able to add some touch that would help to spark a new career shift for people. I always hoped to be a blessing to whomever I'd meet, and it seemed that the universe would sometimes guide me to people who were meant to receive a touch of the "Grace Bestowing Power of God" that I'd been drenched in during those years of monastic ashram life.

With simple and positive intentions, I would offer my skills and suggestions as guided, and as years went by, I'd see again and again that many of those whom I'd helped were doing quite well in ways that built upon what I had offered to them.

Little did I know that the Universal Guru was about to teach me some big and difficult balancing lessons, including the disheartening experience of watching as my actions in mistakenly helping an unethical person into a position of extreme public influence would come to cause serious damage to the world during some of the most important years of choices for humanity to make.

I had rarely experienced major regrets for anything I'd done thus far in my life, but all too soon, a deep and ongoing sense of regret was to become my companion for many years to come.

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