

Kosmos Live – Episode 8 | Dr. Deepak Chopra on Conscious Evolution

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This is Kosmos Live and I am your host Rhonda Fabian.

“We are at that point. We have to decide whether we evolve to the next stage of human evolution, through conscious evolution. But unless we consciously embark on our evolution, we are not going to take the right choice of the fork in the road. It's very urgent that we do.”

That's Dr. Deepak Chopra, Founder of The Chopra Foundation and the Chopra Center for Wellbeing, and a world-renowned pioneer in mind-body medicine and personal transformation. He is Board Certified in Internal Medicine, Endocrinology and Metabolism and a Fellow of the American College of Physicians. Dr. Chopra has authored more than 80 books, published in more than 43 languages, including 22 New York Times best sellers.

KOSMOS | Welcome to Kosmos Live Dr. Chopra.

CHOPRA | Thank you so much. It's a privilege to be with you.

KOSMOS | Dr. Chopra – we seem to be getting better at some things and worse at others. Before we get to the worse part, is there anything we are doing as a species that is helping us to be healthier and happier?

CHOPRA | We are beginning to see interest now in how our biology works holistically. How mind/brain/body gene activity are all a unified process, and that is hopefully leading to a new integration of the scientific method with what we call lifestyle intervention, and an integrative approach, which includes simple things like restful sleep, meditation, stress management, conscious communication, healthy emotions, the role of mind/body integration through yoga and breathing. Movement, nutrition, and how to reset your biological clock through getting grounded with nature and harmonizing your biological rhythms with rhythms of the cosmos. As we learn about the body as a process, and I believe it's a process in consciousness, then we are moving in the right direction for the future.

KOSMOS | That's encouraging. Because on the other hand, it appears we are really damaging our planet and some of our worst instincts are showing up at the wrong time. My own millennial children describe feelings of 'tender grief' for the world. Are their feelings justified?

CHOPRA | Yes, I think so. We have never seen such a magnitude of disruption in the world. Human beings have been violent all along their evolution, but now we have modern capacities and technologies that can result in our extinction. You need one mistake with a computer to technically even set off a nuclear explosion. The capacities we have, technology and its destructive capacities for mechanized deaths combined with very barbaric primitive medieval mindset is definitely a cause for great concern. We are living on a planet where there is a lot of eco-destruction, where the food chain has been poisoned by petroleum products and all kinds of other chemicals and antibiotics and hormones and inflammatory products, where there is

extinction of many species, and now the risking of our own extinction, climate change, extreme social and economic disparities. All this bodes for a cataclysmic, possible catastrophic extinction event.

KOSMOS | Do you think that the state we are in is somehow mirroring our collective unrest?

CHOPRA | I think the collective consciousness is definitely reflecting fear, anxiety, anger, hostility, rage, [imprecision 00:06:55], resentment, grievances and separation. There's no question about that. What we see as the world situation is definitely a reflection of the chaos and turbulence and disconnect in our collective consciousness for sure.

KOSMOS | Thank you. The title of your new book, You Are the Universe Discovering Your Cosmic Self and Why it Matters, suggests that collective reality informs our obligations and duties as humans. Is spiritual health a moral responsibility, and if so, why?

CHOPRA | Spiritual health is, I think, an evolutionary outcome in some people, that it's a natural part of our evolution. In the past, it was confined to a few luminaries. We can name them and just a handful of names, maybe a few dozen names, from the Greek philosophers to the sages of the Upanishads to eastern wisdom traditions. We read about them and we romanticize about them, but there weren't that many. They influenced culture and they influenced philosophy, but for the most part the history of humanity has been barbaric and violent and not much to be proud of. That's the entire history of kingdoms and monarchs and colonial eras. It was all romanticized in the name of king and queen, but it was rape and destruction and pillage.

Same thing with India. We tend to romanticize because of the luminaries of the Upanishads, but that definitely did not apply to the larger population. I think the situation hasn't changed. It's mostly what you call the same story except with the media and social networks and everybody bringing it to our attention, the news bringing it to our attention. What we do have now is the opportunity that because we can connect so easily and information can disseminate so fast, that there's a possibility of if there's a collective will of creating a critical mass of what can be called awakening to consciousness, that might be our only hope.

KOSMOS | Do you mean, like a shared morality?

CHOPRA | Morality as a social norm cannot be imposed. Self-righteous morality just becomes a kind of hypocrisy, people don't follow rules and regulations. Morality can only come from evolution of consciousness, which happens when it happens.

KOSMOS | I guess, Dr. Chopra, my question is can it happen before we manage to destroy ourselves?

CHOPRA | I don't know. When the dinosaurs went extinct we emerged, and that was a cataclysmic event 65 million years ago when a meteorite fell on planet Earth and caused the equivalent of a nuclear explosion or more. If the human experiment fails, something better might emerge.

KOSMOS | Are you saying that humans are non-essential to the story of Creation? It's not very optimistic.

CHOPRA | Everyone has to be realistic and mood making is a big danger, especially in spiritual circles. You pretend to be positive and you're feeling miserable. You have to be realistic. What you have to do is you have to practice. You have to have a discipline, a spiritual discipline of self-reflection, which is asking yourself meaningful questions like "Who am I? What do I want? What is the purpose and meaning of existence? What is my contribution? What is my story? Can we have a different story? What does a good relationship mean? What does a friendship mean? Who are the role models in history, mythology, religion, that we can look up to? What are your unique skills and talents and how do we use them to the service of humanity?"

I think enlarging the conversation, reflective self-inquiry, the practice of transcendence, focusing on healing, healthy emotions like love, compassion, joy, equanimity. If there is a collective movement in the world around this, with conversations that are happening in social media, which is right now mostly trolls, conversations in social media, conversations in the press, conversations in educational institutions. Teaching self-awareness to children in schools. Turning entertainment in the direction where it explores the mystery of existence. It has to be a very big collective effort to understand the nature of reality.

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KOSMOS | In some ways, hasn't self-absorption, as opposed to self-awareness been our downfall, Dr. Chopra?

CHOPRA | Right now what we call the universe, that which we call the universe, that which humans call the universe, is a human construct. Body/mind/universe are human constructs. [inaudible 00:14:44] of knowing and experiencing consciousness and that when human consciousness. No dog knows it's called a dog. No giraffe knows it's called a giraffe.

Once we started to use labels and language and descriptions to explain experiences, and tell stories, then that story manifested as the human universe, but it also made us extremely powerful in evolution, so we became a permanently victorious species. A permanently victorious species disturbs the ecosystem, which is a very delicate, fine-tuned, balanced organic system of life. A permanently victorious species risks its own extinction. We are at that point. We have to decide whether we evolve to the next stage of human evolution, through conscious evolution.

But unless we consciously embark on our evolution, we are not going to take the right choice of the fork in the road. It's very urgent that we do.

KOSMOS | Some say science will save us. You are an accomplished medical doctor. What do you think?

CHOPRA | Science is way behind. Most scientists think that their science is a methodology for knowing the truth, but science is just another system of thought. Science is based on something called subject/object split, which basically separates the scientists from the world that he or she is looking at. That subject/object split is artificial. It's not real. Science by its very nature does not look at the consciousness in which science is an activity. What came before? Science or consciousness? Obviously, it's very obvious that science is one method of inquiry in consciousness. A system of thought just like philosophy or theology or religion. Systems of

thought, even scientific systems of thought, have no privileged position to know the truth. No system of thought can get us there. Science cannot get us there.

Only transcendence and inquiry. A very direct inquiry into the nature of consciousness, which is done through spiritual practices, whether it's self-reflection, self-inquiry, awareness of mind space, awareness of the web of relationship, awareness of body, awareness of sensory experience, conscious awareness of choice making. These are the ways that people will transform. I don't think through science we will ever transform.

KOSMOS | Hasn't science saved lives and improved the quality of life for billions?

CHOPRA | Science is a double-edged sword. It's both divine and diabolical. It can destroy the world, but it can also repair the world, if our emotional and spiritual evolution keep pace with the progress that science makes. But there's a disconnect. The scientists are not interested in self-awareness, or don't even ask who is doing the science. What is it that knows the experience of mind/body/universe? What is experience? What is the experience of doing science itself? Science doesn't talk about experience. Science only talks about that which is observed and the mechanisms of that which is observed, never asks who's observing and why.

KOSMOS | As a student of Buddhism, I understand what it means to say that I'm not my mind, or I'm not my body, but I'm curious--why do you think that we have the experience of mind and body? Why has the universe manifested in such a way that we have that experience?

CHOPRA | In the deeper reality there's no mind, there's no body, and there's no universe. What you call the mind is a human construct for an experience that is thought, emotion and imagination. These are modified forms of consciousness. They're activities of consciousness. So consciousness experiences itself as thoughts, images, and emotions. Consciousness also experiences itself through perceptions. Those perceptions and sensations are labeled body and universe by human beings, but in fact, there is only consciousness modifying itself into sensations, images, feelings, thoughts, and perceptions. In other words, there's only consciousness. There's nothing else. The rest is a human construct mind/body/universe. Once you create those constructs, then you also create constructs of birth and death and ego and all these things.

In the deeper reality, all there is is consciousness. To awaken to that is actually complete freedom to create your personal reality. Collective reality can only be changed when enough people awaken to the fundamental ground of all existence, and realize that consciousness beyond logical primitive. We made up the rest. The rest is a story. When I point to an object like a shoe or a hand or a tree, I ask people "What is that?" And obviously, they say that, "That's a hand. That's a shoe. That's a tree." Again, those are learned perceptions. No baby would be able to call that a shoe or a tree or a hand or a body or a tree. Those labels are constructs given to very fundamental raw experience. Color, shape, form, sound, texture, taste, smell, and then the interpretation of that is thought and feeling, and then the imagination that comes out of that.

Once we come to that very, very fundamental knowing that all there is in this consciousness, that it's infinitely malleable, that the entire universe, anything that has a name or a form, anything that has name or a form, doesn't matter if you call it a subatomic particle, a gluon, a quark, or a galaxy or a tree, or a human body or a giraffe, anything that has a name or a form is a human construct for a mold of knowing and experience of consciousness as that particular

experience. So once you know that, that we created the universe through these constructs, then we can evolve to the next stage, knowing that consciousness is infinitely malleable.

There are realms of existence to explore that are beyond people's imagination most of the time because their imagination is already constricted by their constructs, by their labels, by their beliefs, by their analyses, by the centuries and centuries and conditioning.

I would wager that nobody has an original thought. It's just recycled over thousands of years. So when your mind is conditioned by culture, by religion, by philosophy, by science, by theology, then your very language and your thinking and your behavior reflects that conditioning. Unless we break out of that conditioned mind to understand consciousness as fundamental and all there is, infinitely creative, infinite capacity to evolve, infinite capacity to love, infinite capacity to create, that is the task we have. Then we will evolve from human to metahuman.

KOSMOS | I wonder if some listeners feel it's difficult to completely grasp, because we are humans, we do have an experience of being human. We see life as a gift that we're able to see, smell, hear, that we are able to love, as you say, and also to have an experience of beauty, of the soul.

Is there something about being uniquely human that's somehow apart or different than pure consciousness?

CHOPRA | We call ourselves homo sapiens, which means the wise ones. Then we give labels to every other species. These are our constructs. We came up with that. So yes, by collective agreement we can say that we're all having a human experience, but the human experience hasn't done much, right? It's created an unjust world. It's created violence. It's created mechanized death. It's created nuclear weapons. It's caused the extinction of species. I think if we are totally honest, then we must first of all be willing to question everything that's been said, and not recycle the conditioning, whether it's religious or spiritual.

We are non-local beings and we are having a local experience. We have a capacity. The species of consciousness that we are as humans, since we have to use words, that particular species of consciousness has the capacity for reflection, for inquiry, for self-awareness. For even questioning its own constructs. That is what makes us different from other species. But it's not enough. It's not enough to have constructs that limit us.

We have to go deep into our essential nature, which is pure consciousness, which is infinite creativity, which is evolving at its own pace, but which we can accelerate. Rare, yes, if we have to use a word, then love would be the ultimate truth at the heart of creation, but love not as a sentiment or an emotion, love as the knowingness that is only one in the deeper reality that we are members of one body, members of one mind, and members of one consciousness.

KOSMOS | Can you talk a little bit about your new book, You Are the Universe, Discovering Your Cosmic Self and Why it Matters. Why does it matter?

CHOPRA | The book was inspired by the fact that of the 125 open questions in science, the first two are, number one in order, the first question is what is the universe made of? The answer to that is that's almost impossible to answer. 96% of the universe is dark energy, dark matter, [inaudible 00:30:10] of that 99.99% is invisible interstellar dust. The visible universe, which we are now told is over two trillion galaxies, 706 zillion stars, and uncountable trillions of planets,

is .01%, and that is atomic. But atoms are made of particles. Particles also raise the possibility and what people call quantum fluctuations are just impermanent transient evanescent appearance of energetic particles out of nothing. The only sensible answer to what is the universe made of is that it's made of nothing.

The second most important question in science today, open question, is what is the nature of consciousness? It's called the hard problem of consciousness. No matter how you look at the brain, you cannot explain how a thought is produced, or imagination, or intention, or insight, or inspiration, or creativity, or even a perception. You can't explain how colorless photon going into your eyes results in your experiencing the Milky Way galaxy or New York City or your own body. Consciousness also can't be seen or it's not something that you can touch or taste or smell. Like the universe, it's also made out of nothing.

We have two big mysteries. How does nothing appear as everything? And how do we know that we know what we know, or what we don't know? We know there is existence. We also know there's awareness of existence. Neither of these questions can be answered to the scientific method. The book goes through all the big questions. What happened before the big bang? How did time emerge? How did life begin? Why is the universe so finely tuned for mind/life consciousness? What is the nature of evolution? Is it mechanistic? I think we did a pretty good job of saying in the first nine chapters that all these questions are unanswerable by science. Unanswerable.

You talk to scientists and they will, of course, get angry, and they will say one day we'll find out, but they don't answer the question who's the we that's going to find out and why?—So what we offer at the end of the book is a solution.

It first starts from nothingness, consciousness is formless, but it experiences itself as form and phenomena. The way it experiences itself as form and phenomena is as subject and object of experience, and actually if you go deep into the nature of experience, it's what we call qualia. Qualia is a word which means quality. Qualia is the quality of experience. The feeling of love is a qualia. Compassion is a qualia. Empathy is a qualia. But so is anger, so is resentment, any experience is a qualia. Quanta are units of measurement. Qualia are units of experience. Any experience, the taste of red wine is a qualia. A sexual orgasm is a qualia. Even though you think your body is a physical thing, it's a bunch of perceptions which are qualia.

The last three chapters are devoted to the nature of understanding reality. Taking consciousness as the fundamental ontological primitive, and building a qualia vocabulary that can create a more peaceful, just, sustainable, healthier, joyful, world. Even get us beyond the usual constructs that constrain us, which are the constructs of mind/body/universe.

Finally, if you do not fully understand the essential nature of yourself as formless, dimensionless, infinite, without cause, infinitely creative with infinite potentiality, it's the immeasurable potential of all that was, all that is, all that will be. Then you can liberate yourself into total freedom to create whatever you want, and that may not happen. Maybe in my lifetime, at this present body/mind, but if we survive it'll happen. Humans will evolve into a much more magnificent species.

KOSMOS | For those living their lives, striving to awaken to this higher level of realization, how does this idea of timelessness, formlessness, consciousness, reshape

our understanding of suffering? What is it then to suffer, or does suffering have meaning in a world where we are experiencing such profound change?

CHOPRA |Yes. Suffering has the following five original causes. Number one, not knowing your true self. Number two, grasping at that which cannot be grasped. Let me ask you something. Where is yesterday?

KOSMOS | I guess it only exists in memory.

CHOPRA |Yeah, but as an experience it's gone, right?

KOSMOS | Yes, it's in the past.

CHOPRA |Yeah. Five minutes ago is gone. Two minutes ago is gone. One minute ago is gone. One second ago is gone. Experience is ungraspable. The past is ungraspable. The future is ungraspable, and the present, what you call now as a moment of time, is ungraspable. By the time you hear the end of my sentence, the first part of my sentence is already gone. All experience is evanescent and ungraspable. Your body's an experience, and it's not the same in every moment of now. In fact, even now is not a moment in time. Your body's ungraspable. Your emotions are ungraspable. Nothing that we call experience is graspable. So when people try to grasp onto experience instead of turning to who or what is having the experience, they suffer, then that creates the fear of impermanence. That creates the hallucination of the ego, and that creates the fear of death. Everybody's out for their ego self, which is a hallucination to begin with.

Suffering can only ... do animals suffer? I'm sure they suffer if you mistreat them, but they don't have existential suffering. They don't wonder about death, and they don't wonder about God, and they don't wonder about what is morally right or what is morally wrong. The fall from Grace is precisely this. That knowledge of good and evil is precisely this. That we have the capacity to understand and we also have the capacity to be anguished about and understanding that creates fear because we are so conditioned by centuries of thought.

Suffering is very real, and we have inflicted it upon the planet, and we have inflicted it to each other, and we have inflicted it to other sentient beings. The privilege we have is that we can actually repair all of that if we collectively embark. If you want to make it very simple, and you know yoga, the way it's defined originally, the yoga of reflection, the yoga of meditation, the yoga of self-awareness, the yoga of love, the yoga of ... since you're a student of Buddhism, the Eight-Fold Path, I think of that as yoga, and the yoga of right action, which means above all, just make sure that every thought, every word, every action, comes from a deep sense of love. That would be the simplest way to cure suffering, to make sure you're motivated only by love.

But love has to also be combined with the experience of deep stillness, silence, lack of analytical thought. What Rumi said, "God's language is silence, everything else is poor translation." The ability to sit still and just be is a requirement, and then love in action from there. Love in action from being settled in the experience of being, rather than thinking.

The sequence is being, feeling, reflecting, speaking and doing. That would be the right unfoldment. Being, feeling. Feeling love, compassion, joy, empathy, equanimity, the reflecting, no dogmatic thinking, and living these questions, and then speaking only when necessary and

only when helpful. Then doing what needs to be done, and leaving the results to the unknown. That would be yoga. That's the true meaning of yoga, which means union.

KOSMOS | Dr. Chopra, how can those among us who are on this path or have touched the truth of your words, either momentarily or perhaps profoundly in their lives, what can they do, what can we do to help advance this collective awakening in time?

CHOPRA | I think first of all, focus on your own awakening, and nothing more important than that, otherwise what Wittgenstein said, "Our life is a dream. We are asleep but once in a while we wake up enough to know that we're dreaming." People have to recognize that they're never present to being, and so start with that and just ... they say that there are three things *seva*, service, *satsang*, (sangha) which means hanging out with the right people, creating your own community, (sangha), and then *simran* which means remembering your true self, your nature. So *seva*, *satsang* and *simran*.

KOSMOS | Thank you for those beautiful words. You've given such hope to millions of people, in your inspiring career. Thank you for your service, Dr. Chopra, and thank you for sharing with us today on Kosmos Live.

CHOPRA | Thank you very much.

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