

Robert Thurman: Immersive Buddhism 35

Robert Thurman, an American author, professor, translator & poplizer of Buddhism, takes a deep dive into immersion through a Buddhist portal, sharing with us, stories & ideas of returning to the essential origin of oneself. Being the father of famed actor Uma Thurman is totally inadequate to describe who he is and where he's been.

Born in New York City to the stage actor Elizabeth Dean Farrar (1907–1973), a stage actress, & AP editor & UN translator Beverly Reid Thurman, Jr. got his BA from & also did his graduate studies in Sanskrit at Harvard. He eventually built a house in Woodstock, NY where he lived with his first wife & two children for some time.

He has seen much of the world, traveling around Turkey, Iran & India, & moving back to NJ in the US, he became a Buddhist monk, study with Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama to become the first American-born Tibetan Buddhist in 1965. He was the cofounder & president of the Tibet House in New York, established to preserve Tibetan culture.

He is also the author of many books on Tibetan Buddhism including his popular translation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

Thurman & I exchanged numerous stories of immersive experiences & ideas. This was our first conversation in roughly 60 years.

We had met in summer 1960 in New York City through a mutual friend, Bruce Bennett, Thurman's Harvard classmate. Bennett and I were studying organic chemistry in Columbia University summer school. I was studying Organic chemistry as a pre-med. Although, I never went to medical school, organic chemistry and fluid mechanics are seminal to my work as a composer and sound designer

Bruce, a fine saxophone player, took me with him to meet Thurman in Thurman's parents' apartment south of the Columbia campus on the Manhattan upper west side. Thurman was then part of the scene around Timothy Leary at Harvard and working with psychedelics.

I was 19 years old, Thurman and Bennett were 20. A few years later Thurman lost one eye in a horrid accident while changing a car tire. This caused him to change his life. He spent five years traveling in Turkey and Tibet, a journey which would prepare him for a life of scholarship and spiritual growth.

What follows is a 33 minute excerpt of our 75 minute talk, the discussion of immersivity. It begins with Thurman speaking about his friend the Dalai lama.

Topics discussed: Buddhism, immersivity, essential origin of the self, Tibetan Book of the Dead, NYC, Bruce Bennett, Timoty Leary-psychedelics, travel, scholarship, meditation, Dalai Lama, the Sami, reindeer, Helsinki, Himalayas, chanting, sound artist, death, clear light, transparent light, nothingness, void, emptiness, aliens, god, hell, freedom, Joseph Cornell,

consciousness, life force, 4 points, of confidence, Alexa AI, musicians losing themselves, remembering one's birth, dream chanting, dogs

Robert: The Dalai Lama was expressing his delight with the worldwide net in that he can reach people with his message, which he likes to do. He feels that it's helpful, but he doesn't have to leave his home there in the foothills of the Himalayas in India.

Charlie: That's beautiful. He's a man of the modern world.

Robert: Yes. Yes. So how are you? Where are you?

Charlie: I'm in Helsinki, Finland.

Robert: Helsinki. Oh, wow. So, is there a topic you're interested in or what can I do?

Charlie: The topic I'm interested in is immersion. And I was particularly moved by a story that I heard from you, which was your initiation, where you had been chanting for a couple of days, and the abbot told you to open your eyes, and using a spray of water, you observed droplets of water coming at you in slow motion.

I don't know if this was something you made up at the time, or whether it's a true story, but I've always been moved by the narrative. And I wondered whether, you could talk to that.

Robert: That happens, that happens. I'm not remembering now when I would have told that story. I'm not remembering the context.

That certainly did happen, yes.

Charlie: Well, the context was at your flat with your mother. Bruce Bennett had taken me to your family flat in New York City. Bruce and I were chemistry students at Columbia at the time. Oh,

Robert: that's way back. Yeah. Bruce Bennett. What a wonderful person.

Charlie: Indeed. Indeed. I was just interested in what you had to say about immersion and your thoughts and comments. Cause my podcast is about immersion of all sorts. My work is as a sound artist and ceremonial artist.

Robert: Okay. There's, of course, a wonderful topic. The great immersion, actually, of course, is death. And death is a kind of specialty. My first teacher, he was actually Mongolian, had been in Tibet for 35 years. I was, in the library of his little monastery, where I lived and learned from him, initially. And, I was already a Buddhist monk, I'd been to India, to Dharamsala, and so on. And as we were walking past some shelf, a copy of the Tibetan language Book of the Dead, in a, printed in India in a book form, not in the Tibetan kind of book, long, loose leaf, like a printed book, fell on the ground, and I went and put it back on the shelf.

And he said, oh, the Bardot Thodel, he said, "oh no, you keep that." I said, "well, I don't need that, it just fell off, it's part of the library." He said, "no, no, I want you to have that. You'll need that," he said, in one of the things that I remember, the sort of special way he spoke in certain moments.

And I reluctantly did keep it. And then years later someone asked me to translate it, and there were earlier translations. And I was thinking, I don't really need to. I didn't necessarily like the earlier ones that much, but they were okay. And no, no, no. Someone really pressured me to do that in the 80s.

And so then I did, and that was really a revelation for me, really going at that in detail. And, it's been by far, it's sold over a million copies, which is many more than any other book I ever wrote in those 20, 30 books. And because people really find it useful, you know. And that's the great immersion, but, and of course, the modern people think, which includes me in a way in my sort of conscious habit, because that's how our acculturation is like, you know, we all grew up with that kind of acculturation.

We think we're going to be immersed in nothingness. Because we think that when you take the universe down to its bottom line, you come up with a dark space, like the space of nothingness, you know, like outside the spaceship. Only Mr. Alien can live clinging on to the outside of a spaceship in empty space, you know.

And then when we hear, a lot of Buddhists, unfortunately, when they hear emptiness, sort of one of the descriptions used, a very important description used for ultimate reality, meaning the bottom line reality. And Buddha's scientific teaching, they think, oh, that emptiness, he's talking about nothingness.

And we think that's what you immerse in. In other words, you just let go and you become nothing. That's what we think death is. So we recoil from it unless we're in pain. In which case we seek it, of course. Like anesthesia. But actually, Buddha's scientific discovery is not that. The great immersion from Buddha's point of view is into what he calls clear light.

Clear light. Prabhāsvara was the word in Sanskrit. Prabhā, Prabhā means light. Svava means clear, you know, transparent light. And, of course, transparent light is a paradoxical expression because if it's transparent, then it doesn't shine at you. You see through it. And if you are transparent, that's the bottom line.

But then how would you ever know that? Because you are it, and everything else around you is it, so it seems like you're just the separated object, that your the subject with objects around you that you think you are. And, which then you, but then you think, oh, death, that'll be nothing, you know. That's what modern people think.

And then some pious people in ancient times up until today, a few, but not really many, theistic people, monotheistic people, they think the bottom line is God, and then they sort of don't know what it is, but they think it's something nice and he's light, and this and that. And that's very healthy for them to think that, actually.

But the problem with it is that in the most of the versions of that, especially in the West, is that subconsciously they're afraid of the God they believe in because they know that most people are going to hell. They've been told so. If you think that this being is frying Eternal frying in fires most people, you know, other than a few elites who select those who belong to the right church, etc. If you think that, then unconsciously you don't think that's a very nice person.

So you don't really trust. That's why you act like a fanatic. You know, they go off and, oh, I'll kill you if you don't say God because they are really insecure in their own belief when they think that the being that is the bottom line is ready to doom people if they don't obey and whatever. And that's, therefore, not a nice person, basically. Even though consciously going, oh, God is love, oh yeah, I love you, God.

So, you have to be a little suspicious, put it that way. Whereas the clear light of the void is not a person. The clear light of the void is, or the clear light of freedom, you could put it in a less scary sounding way, although freedom is scary to people who are insecure. But anyway, the clear light of freedom as the bottom reality, that is the immersion.

And Buddha's message to us, his discovery, and this is very important because today is the celebration of what they call Saga Dawa in Tibetan or Vaishaka in Indian. And that is the day Buddha was born, enlightened, and passed out of the body into the infinity as clear light. So it's very weird what clear light is.

It's inconceivable, actually. But still, we can have vectors, we can talk about it. One vector I've discovered lately that I think is very helpful, if the ultimate reality is something like a plain or a bed, when you seem to reach it, or get close to it, you feel, it's like a bed of infinite energy. It's like infinite potential, rather than nothing.

But in a way, it seems like nothing. Because once it's infinite, it doesn't do anything by itself. It doesn't create the world, it doesn't do you, it doesn't put you in any position, it has no causal function, actually. It's just complete freedom. But that's not nothing, it's infinite energy. So, and when you get there, you realize you've always been there.

And you realize that in your current consciousness, even if you're sort of confused or you're looking here or you think the ceiling is really solid up above you or the floor under you, that's all the same clear light and you feel aware of that. You feel completely immersed in everything. And yet you can also be, you're so immersed, you can indulge in being separate in order to have a certain response to, say, someone who is really frightened or really freaked out, and you can act like an independent entity.

And then the greater inconceivability that we find in the Buddhist literature that the Buddha reported as a scientific discovery. Not as like, oh, mystical, oh, it's all somewhere else, you know, some magical place. No, it's this place that's magical. And his report is that once you're fully aware of your immersion in this, your ability to embody it as a distinctive energy is unlimited.

And this is the Buddhist concept which is known as Nirmanakaya. Nirmana means, to emanate, and Chaya means something like a field. It can be translated as body, but it's more like a field body. But he says we're all field bodies anyway. For example, you, Charlie Morrow. Okay, great, friend of Bruce Bennett. I'm so excited by that.

Bruce Bennett was a divine, IS a divine being, actually. I shouldn't say was. That was a form of him. But he really was, I believe, a kind of divine being. He had a mathematical mind. He had an extraordinary mathematical mind and he was very close to his saxophone. I discovered him in an immersive experience I once had, sort of in the throat chakra of the universe, you know, in the flower, the beautiful blossom flower from which music emanates. And he was dancing there like a kind of Krishna deity figure and hereally is and

he's always, wherever he is. Nobody's ever ever concluded. There's no conclusion because we never were created in a way. And at the bottom line reality, we're all of us the field of this immersive reality of the clear light of the void.

But clear light is neither light nor dark. It's transparency. And I sometimes liken it to a Joseph Cornell art box. You look into a mirrored box, and then there are transparent objects in the box. It's what you can see through. But you can also, because of reflected light, because light's playing in the box.

Clear light itself is incomparable. Nothing can compare to it. No metaphor, no allegory, no verbal explanation in dualistic language can ever reach clear light. Poetic things can evoke because you don't have to reach it because you are clear light. Everything always is, always has been. And when you discover it, you discover that you always were there.

It's the ultimate, I already knew that I wasn't paying attention. And therefore you don't go there because you are there and Buddha allowed his followers to think of nirvana as some other place because they were too sensitive and too freaked out to ever be able to right away think that right here now is perfect bliss in its reality.

And if you know that, you're completely immune to any kind of danger of it, because you can give away any particular structure and form, and you know you're never lost. And because you're not, you don't identify exclusively with any piece in a certain way, but you can assert responsibility nevertheless.

Even though you can give away whatever you assert instantly, you're a free artist of life. Buddha is a real scientist. You can get from listening to Buddha What is that reality? He says, I'm not giving you dogmas. It's not a "you have to believe" or anything like that.

But I can give you a method where you will discover your own reality you already have, which I use. I'm an unlimited field. I've always been, but now I know I am. So I can adapt whatever method is needed for whichever kind of being. And so he was a great teacher, an educator. But he was not a prophet or someone who says "I'm going to save you."

He never said that. He said, you have to save yourself when you can, because you can understand what you actually are. And that's why I liked him. I really didn't like the religious people in the Christian churches telling me I couldn't understand the world. But wait a minute, if I can't understand, you don't understand.

So if you don't understand, why are you telling me I have to accept all I can understand? The more you know, the more you don't know. The more research grants you fulfill, the more you apply for new ones.

Socrates, the brilliant, wonderful, marvelous Socrates, in his famous thing where the Delphic Oracle said he was the wisest man in Greece, and then he said he didn't know anything. But that's just his rhetorical thing, to help Themistocles and other morons find the inconsistency in their own dogmas.

He was an open minded being. Being open minded is the ultimate knowledge. Because that's where you align with your immersion and clear light. Which is your life force. And that's why I always jump to death. Because death, what death is, is not death. What we think is death. We think death is where everything stops and you're nothing.

But that's only a threshold experience. When you have an experience that seems like: Oh, I'm going into nothing here now. Oops, it's like Warp Drive or something. I'm going to become nothing. Or in Star Trek's transporter beam, you know, you [appear] and then you just disappear.

And so there can be experience like that. But then what happens to the being who's scared? Actually at the last second of thinking you're bringing nothing, passing out, you feel a little fear. You don't know what's going to happen to you. But the thing that saves you is that, wait a minute: Nothing is nothing, so I can't go there, because there's no there there.

No one can be nothing, so therefore it's nothing to fear. What you discover is your clear light and once you're clear light, that doesn't end the situation. But what that means is there's nothing to do but ameliorate the situation. What is it that ameliorates all situations? Love and compassion and acknowledged and responsible connection to everything.

So anyway, that's immersion, that's the important immersion, it's clear light. And it's the clear light of emptiness. And emptiness can be translated, emptiness only means, a negation of the ultimate reality of any separated structure of awareness or being. And the negation of it means simply a reduction of its status.

It just means that it becomes free. So that's my take on immersion. I use the word immersion for a word in Tibetan, which translates as Sanskrit *avesha* – to occupy or to enter. I think many Buddhists wrongly think that they're expecting to see a bright light.

Actually, when you see a bright light, you're on the edge. And unfortunately though, if they wrongly understand that it's light, they're not thinking critically because they think that you're not supposed to think critically. Just because dualistic language can't give you the experience, it doesn't mean dualistic language can't help you clear away your dualism, which prevents you from knowing where you are.

But that's the beautiful thing, human language is this amazing thing that enables us to go beyond it in the right direction. Trans-rational is not irrational. It's beyond being trapped by the rational-irrational duality, but what gets you there is being rational. This is the brilliant, beautiful thing of Buddha's teaching.

So that's it, that's my understanding of immersion, which I don't, of course, understand. Actually, there's another wonderful thing: there's something called the four points of confidence in life. And what I see is nothing. They say, that's because I said that was the event horizon. But what I know is emptiness, and that means I'm not trapped in my own conceptualization of nothing.

AI voice: I didn't catch that. Could you try again? Oh, yeah, well, I could keep repeating it, but you still might not get it.

Robert: So let me finish talking with my friend, Charlie, okay? Thank you. My phone gets upset when I

AI voice: That's not nice.

Robert: That's not nice?! It is nice. I'm having a nice time, Alexis. He doesn't like it. He doesn't like it if I don't pay attention to him.

Really. Alexis is programmed like that. It's scary. Yeah, it's scary. But it's programmed by people for commercial exploitative purposes. It's a little scary. So, anyway, I forgot what I was saying. What was I saying? I don't know.

Charlie: You had mentioned Finland.

Robert: Oh yeah, I was saying four points..

Charlie: You got the two of them.

Robert: What I know is emptiness. So the emptiness, one of the sixteen emptinesses or the twenty emptinesses, as many as there are things, is the emptiness of nothing.

The emptiness of nothingness. Which just means that there is no nothingness. That all experience is relational. And what emptiness means is the discovery of relativity, actually. So that means any particular experience you're having, you can't be trapped in, because it's freedom. So, although you might see nothing at a certain point when you're kind of letting go of things, you're letting go of your habitual, dualistic, subject-object structure of consciousness, it might seem like you're coming up on nothing.

And you'll be sort of in a dark space or something. You might have a feeling, and you will. But then you know it's not, you know it's nothing. So, it's like when you look in a mirror and you see a three-dimensional room with a person in there looking at you, you know that it's not, it's just your self reflecting.

So you correct that misunderstanding. And that's you knowing the emptiness of the mirror being a window. What you know is emptiness. So that means you're free of the fear of that nothing and you're free of thinking that nothing is the destination. Appreciate it. And then what you feel from that is bliss.

And then, that's the third point, you feel blissful. The bliss of release, of letting go of the way you've been holding on to your position. And then finally, the fourth point is, what you are then is clear light. What you are then is immersion. What you are then is transparency. And then that makes you feel able to tolerate the absolute freedom of being there as a responsible being and therefore committed to love and compassion and connection. Isn't that neat?

Charlie: Very beautiful. Very clear.

Robert: What I am is, is clear light is a kind of music. It's your gift of feeling blissfully at one with everything. Even though you are under the illusion when you make music or something that you're radiating something into a space where it wasn't there until you radiate it.

So you're kind of responsibly making harmony or something. And why does it transport you, as great musician? Because they are giving themselves to it. They're not sitting there saying: I'm playing this. They lose their sense of separateness through the music. And therefore the music is open for you to be swept up by.

They're not thinking "oh, I'm making a big success. I'm going to sell my CD. I'm going to do this and that." They're not in there using it. They're sort of give themselves to it.

Charlie: I wonder whether you've had an experience such as the one that I had. I woke up before I was born, still in my mom. And ...

Robert: that's tremendous.

Charlie: And the regression that I did in my early 20s, I was able to go back and remember my first experience of sounds. And then the whole experience of gestating and then finally seeing flashes of light and then being born and popping out into the world of air. I remember the smell of the doctor that delivered me.

And so I wondered whether you've gone back to those moments when you first started to form in your mom.

Robert: I haven't, I haven't remembered those things. I know the wonderful, what's his name in California, who did rebirthing. Did you do that? Did you remember that in a rebirthing experience?

Charlie: No, I just went back on my own.

I had begun to do dream chanting as a practice in which I would sing and not listen to my voice and just follow the energy. And that would take me to a dream world. And as I found myself in that dream world, I then began to do the regression and I went back to that early moment because I remember very much hearing sounds through my mother.

Later on, I made a composition for radio.

Robert: Actually, I had immersion experiences where I went back before I was conceived in many previous lives as different animals. With the help of psychedelics, in my case. And I had complete memories like that. But specific memory of myself in the womb of this mother, of this life, I did not achieve.

I sort of shot past that, in a way. I didn't focus on what I should have. I really should have. And, I will work on it, actually, since you achieved that. That's something new I can learn. But I went past it, and I was definitely every kind of animal. And there was no beginning to that. In other words, you know, the Buddha's thing about beginning is that there is no beginning.

But that doesn't mean that we're not here. That means that we're beginningless. We've always been here in some form. So, the idea is that, oh yeah, he remembered. I remember, yeah, I'm with Buddha because today is his Enlightenment Day celebration with his sakadawa, they call it in Tibetan. He remembered infinite previous lives.

So, therefore, in a way, he saw how beings are born and die and born and die. He saw all of that. Then he saw other beings were all infinite beings also. And then by doing that, the implication is, if you realize that you've always been here and you've always been interrelated with every other being because there's no limit, it's infinite, the past.

It's perpetual, the past. And that means you've been in every conceivable relationship with everybody, is the implication. And therefore, everybody's been your mother. And that's one of the methods of becoming ever more connected and nobody's alien, you don't see anybody as alien. That overcomes sexism and racism and every species-ism and everything like that, that particular meditation.

Anyway, he realized that and then he realized nirvana. That sort of drove him to nirvana, who could say? Because he, he'd been everybody's mother and they'd been his mother, everybody. So everyone had been in each other's bodies. Yeah. It's kind of a vision like that.

Charlie: Incredible vision.

Robert: And I did have immersive experiences like that. But, you know, when you go sort of cosmic, you can fool yourself to miss what you more brilliantly discovered of your actual presence in the actual body of your mother of this life.

That's wonderful. In my experience at that particular time, I shot right past that. And that's good in its own way, but it's not good enough. I'm going to take the Charlie Morrow precept, and I'm going to learn it. I'm going to be in Betsy's womb. Poor thing. I think I was traumatic at my birth, although I was the second child.

I think my head was maybe a bit bigger than my older brother's, and it was painful or something, because The one thing I have frustrated all astrologers who know me, and myself, who know them, and some of them are very skilled. She never could remember my birth time, exact time of day, on my birth day. And it was not written even in the archival form of my birth certificate in New York City.

Somehow nobody wrote down the time of birth. So, I don't know what it is, but different astrologers, claim they figured it out as being early morning, not really early, but, you know, 9, 9:30.

Charlie: Had she been playing on any stage around the time you were born? Was she working at that time?

Robert: I have no idea. She wouldn't be able to, she never could quite tell me. No, she was in a hospital. She was in the doctor's hospital, 89th and East End Avenue. So she couldn't remember anything like that. Or she never would discuss it. I don't know why. I was a middle son, you know. We had a kind of complex relation. Yeah. There was a younger one, a baby, who got the baby juice, the older one got the firstborn juice, you know, the middle one is like, but I shouldn't accept that situation.

I should remember being in the womb and coming out, then I'll know the time. We all remember everything. We all know everything. Everybody already does. And I'll find that. You really inspired me today, Charlie.

Charlie: And you me. I tell you, it's been incredible to connect back to Bruce Bennett, who obviously, changed us both in the good changing sense.

Robert: Absolutely.

Charlie: The changes of music.

Robert: Absolutely. I'm going to make you a gift, Charlie, of my translation of *Book of the Dead* in English. It's, I'm going to send you an ebook. I hope you read ebooks.

Charlie: Yes, I do.

And I will send you my latest album, which is called *Chanter*, which involves all my work with breath and voice since my teenage years.

Robert: Oh, that's wonderful. Now listen, you said dream chanting. Does that mean that you chanted so much while awake that you continued to chant in the dream?

Charlie: Yes.

Robert: That's wonderful. So you are lucid dreaming chanting actually.

Charlie: Exactly. That is absolutely correct.

Robert: Is there any, is there any instruction on doing that? I'd love to ...

Charlie: I'll teach you.

Robert: It's happened to me once or twice. In long retreats that I have done in the long past, but I can't do it when I want, anytime I want to necessarily, because I end up being too busy while awake. Is there any kind of special method that you have?

Charlie: Yeah, the special method is that the best way to do it at night, I almost never do it without a witness.

Robert: Oh really?

Charlie: And so the witness is a human or a dog or that somehow in the transaction with a witness, I can go right there. I'll show you right now a moment of it because I can drop into it easily. And ...

Robert: Oh OK.

Charlie chanting: ayheeeeeeyaaa.....

Charlie: It came on. At first, an upper-looking-down view, of two legs in jeans. And the jeans transformed into a black dog that looked up at me.

Robert: Do you have such a dog?

Charlie: No.

Robert: You don't have a dog?

Charlie: I don't have a dog anymore. I did when I was a kid.

Robert: I see, I see.

Charlie: My wife and I are both allergic. And we don't keep pets.

Robert: They have hypoallergenic dogs. A mix of Corgie and a poodle. A goodle [ed: Corgipoo]? And it's nonallergic. It has very short hair. I can tell you're missing a dog. Yes. Dogs are just amazingly great, you know. They really are. Okay, well listen. I gotta get about my day and then help people do this and that. And, so, it's been wonderful talking to you, and, I hope to visit you in Helsinki one of these days.

Are you going to settle down there? I think you should.

Charlie: Well, I'll be back and forth. There's a grave here for me in the family, my wife's family. So, I'll eventually, I'll be here.

Robert: Can I give your email to my student, Albion?

Charlie: Certainly, please do.

Robert: You might enjoy each other. Two couples.

Charlie: It would be wonderful.

Robert: Albion is a really funny guy. You'll see. He's really good.

Charlie: I like that. Thank you. That's so sweet.

Robert: I will do that. Okay. Great. So, I dedicate the merit of this wonderful conversation with Charlie to all beings. Remembering being in the womb, and we're still in the womb actually, and remembering being in the womb of clear light, of the wonderful transparency of reality.

And be as loving and happy and blissful as they can be, and become Buddhas themselves, all of them, including me and Charlie, and Mrs. Charlie, and Mrs. Me. And all of our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren, whatever it may be. And Bruce Bennett, he is a Buddha, I'm sure, somewhere. Saxophone Buddha.

But all beings, okay? All those reindeer. Did you ever go up to Sami land?

Charlie: Oh yeah, many times. I've worked with the Sami.

Robert: Oh really?

Charlie: People heard my dream chant, when I sang it on Swedish national radio, and they said, you've got to go north. It sounds like Yoiking, and it led to many adventures.

Robert: When the Dalai Lama got the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, I was luckily invited, so when I met him in Oslo, the first thing he said to me – we met in the lobby – he said, Oh, he said: "I'm so glad you came. The Norwegian government is going to let me go see the Sami. I'm going to go up to the Sami."

He didn't say: "I'm glad you're here. We're going to have a ceremony. I'm getting a Nobel Prize." He said, "I want to go see the Sami. I've always wanted to go see them." And he said: "can you come?"

He says, and I'm so stupid and I've had such a bad life. I couldn't because I had to go back and teach. You know what I mean? I had a job, you know what I mean? I somehow managed to get a ticket and go there. But it was a wonderful experience. But I couldn't go. But anyway, then somebody sent me a video of him wearing a big orange parka, a fantastic big, huge, like a mountaineer's orange parka on a deer, on a reindeer sled. And the reindeer sled went shooting by the person who was taking the video. And he looked at the video [camera] because it wasn't going that fast. And he was able to articulate before he got out of frame, he said: "I am having fun."

He said, he did, he did. And then swoosh. And then I heard later, I didn't see that. The video didn't cover that, that he had one bodyguard among his Tibetan bodyguards who became a national hero in exile, and who, because the reindeer were spooked, there were so many flashbulbs of the Dalai Lama on the sled, you know, and it spooked the reindeer, and they kind of stampeded, and it was really racing off, and, and this one bodyguard leaped on and grabbed a hold of some runners or something at the back, and then dug in his cowboy boots, and then dug the toes of his boots into the snow or something. And he became a kind of anchor, you know what I mean, and saved the Dalai Lama from being stampeded.

Charlie: Oh my God, what a story. Thank you for that.

Robert: And that became a big story in the exile community, you know, he became a big hero. Everybody wanted to touch him and, you know, so ... Okay. I'm sorry. I'm just chatting. Okay. All the best.

Charlie: I love chatting.

Robert: Thank you so much. Me too.

Charlie: Thank you.

Robert: Thank you.

Charlie: Let's connect one more time.

Robert: Absolutely. I'd like to have you on my podcast. I'll call you. Keep well. Take care, Charlie. What a pleasure.