



## Movie Of Me, Now Playing 24 Hours A Day, by Krishna Das

What keeps us away from the gentle rain of grace? It's our endless obsession, all day long, with I, me, mine. We wake up in the morning and start writing "the movie of Me": What am I going to do? Where am I going to go? How am I going to get there? Is this enough? Is it too much? What's going to happen? What am I going to wear? How do I look?

Does he like me? Why not? All day long. The movie of Me. We write it, direct it, produce it, and star in it. We write reviews that we read and get depressed! Then we go to sleep and do it again the next day. I've seen it so many times. And still, every time I turn on the TV, there it is: me, myself and my stuff.

Gradually (key word) and inevitably (the other key word), spiritual practices like chanting remove this subjective version of life by slowly dissolving the attachments that keep us feeling separate from the people around us, and separate and cut off from the beauty that lives in our own hearts. Everything we do in life is connected to everyone and everything else, but because we're locked up in our own little world, when we reach out to touch another person, all we touch is our version of the other person, and all they touch is their version of us. We're rarely \*really\* touching each other.

In 1997, when I first started traveling around to chant with people, a friend of mine arranged for me to lead kirtan in Tucson, Arizona, at a Middle-Eastern restaurant called The Caravan. I was going to be singing in a small waiting area that was part of the entrance to the restaurant. On the other side of this room was the kitchen. I was sitting on the floor with my friend Bub, who was drumming; the eight or nine people who showed up to sing were sitting in chairs by the walkway that the customers and the waitpersons took to get to the dining room.Â

Customers were staring at us quizzically; food was going back and forth from the kitchen; pots and pans were being washed; espresso was being made; and there I was, singing and thinking, This is as bad as it gets! But I was wrong. As I was about to start singing the last chant of the night, Namah Shivaya, two big Native American guys -- they had to be over six feet tall and 300 pounds each -- wandered into the restaurant radiating an aura of alcohol. They plopped down in the two empty chairs right in front of me and stared blankly. I thought, I'm going to sing my [tail] off because I will probably be dead before the chant is over.Â

I started singing. And I really sang. When Bub and I finished, we ended with a long Om. Then it was quiet except for the noise from the

kitchen. I was sitting with my eyes closed when I realized that one of the guys had gotten up and was standing over me, staring down. I looked up at this mountain of a man. "Now what, Maharai-ji? What are you going to do to me now?" The man said, "I'm Native American. [Pause.] I was in Vietnam. [Pause.] I know the real thing when I hear it. [Looooong pause.] And you got it." As he wandered away, I started to breathe again.Â

I'd been so caught up in the movie of Me -- my own program of who and what I was afraid of -- that there had been no room to see who this person really was. It was very humbling to recognize how deeply I was caught in my own projections, even after a whole night of chanting.Â

All of us live in our own universe to some extent. We must become aware of the way these programs of ours work, and how they color our lives and cut us off from other people, seeing them only from far behind our private barricades. Everybody brings their own past and carries their own future within them at every moment. We carry the sense that we are the most important thing in the universe and everybody else exists in relation to us. I look at you and see the way you dress and your hair, and it brings up a lot of unconscious assumptions about who you are. It's not who you are; it's only my version of you. This is what human beings do. Buddha said that comparing is actually the last kind of thinking to go. We're always comparing: She's higher than me. He's this. She's that. All day long, we see ourselves through the eyes of other people.Â