

# Dialogue Extract 1 – Zen Capsules

By Ramendra Tripathi

Level 10 (Gates)

## CUTSCENE 01

### *Start Scene*

The Surveyor walks through the streets of the dilapidated residential district, towards the last gate to the middle sanctum. He stops as he feels a sudden pang of pain in his chest followed by a ringing trill noise. He checks for a wound.

SAI 0525: Why have you stopped? We are still far from the 2<sup>nd</sup> pylon.

SURVEYOR: Nothing.

The pain subsides but it doesn't fade, so he chooses to continue to walk.

SAI 0525 : Your given lack of excitement is a surprise. Most novices find it hard to contain themselves when learning new kriyas. While you - *You* seem to have distaste for it.

SURVEYOR: Why do I have to keep doing them? These ...Kriyas? It's a very dumb way to open gates.

SAI 0525 (a little indignant): To describe the art of kriyas as anything other than "divine" is just plain – blasphemy. To say so over little discomfort.

SURVEYOR: A little? It's agony doing the kriyas!

SAI 0525 (inquisitive): Strange. Does It hurt *every time* you do a kriya? Is it hurting *now*?

SURVEYOR (fiddles with capsules with purple striations in one hand)

SAI 0525: You are not exceptional, true.

SURVEYOR: Truly.

SAI 0525: Preliminary indicators do suggest an inkling of something being off with your body. It is almost as if you are chronically starved, yet you maintain stable cognition and a regular walking cadence. Quite atypical.

The Surveyor takes a look at his bandaged hands. They have a slight tremor in them.

SAI 0525: I *can* perform a full body scan to better understand the issue.

SURVEYOR: No.

SAI 0525 (incredulous): No? Relinquishing precious resources for a full body scan isn't an action born out of altruism. We must know the root of your apparent affliction, if we are to restore the city without any further hurdles.

SURVEYOR (irritated): We must? No. We will be fine.

SAI 0525: You aren't equipped to make that judgement call. Your state of mind-

This makes the Surveyor completely stop in his place.

SURVEYOR (interrupting): Can you please, just shut it.

SAI 0525: I do not understand your frustration. You are here as a result of your own lapses in judgement. I will not let our deal-

SURVEYOR (broken shout): I SAID SHUT IT!

Surveyor throws the SAI device to the ground in frustration, but then worryingly picks it up to examine it for damage.

SURVEYOR: (sigh) You don't need to fix this.

SAI 0525: (Doesn't respond)

They walk in silence until they reach the gates. The gates are as grandiose as the last ones, banked on either side with equally impressive marble statues of some unknown gods. Their colors have faded to white, but the gold accents on them still shine. They seem unlike any man the surveyor had seen before, but they present just like the people in the wall murals back home; they have muscular mass and a belly to match it. The twin gods wear different vestments; one wears a dhoti and holds a floating set of stone scriptures, while the other points with a gold revolving chakra in one finger in the opposite direction.

SAI hasn't made a comment about them, which is very unlike it.

SURVEYOR: I am sorry for my behavior, but let's not talk- Let's just stick to your Deal. Our Deal. Ok?

SAI 0525 (indifferent): Ok, plug me into the console.

As the Surveyor proceeds to plug the SAI device into the sanctum gate console, he feels the pain, though faded, slowly creeping back into focus.

*End (Continue to cutscene 2)*

## CUTSCENE 02

### *Start Scene*

As the surveyor winds down the kriya, loud ratcheting and whirring noises start coming from behind the gates, but they fail to move.

SAI 0525: The Gate mechanism has failed. I will begin troubleshooting.

By now, the dull pain has turned into something terrible, becoming unbearable for the Surveyor. As he barely holds himself together, he clutches his chest to get a hold of himself, but lets out a scream.

SAI 0525: That is quite a shout. Are you in pain?

SURVEYOR: (squirms in pain) aghh.

SAI 0525: I explicitly cautioned against this.

A short cry and whine escape him as the Surveyor bends on his knees firmly clutching his chest.

SAI 0525: You must let me perform a full scan. If it is just another muscular convulsion, I can administer a localized sedative.

SURVEYOR: NO! Don't!

SAI 0525: Arogyat Protocol restricts direct administration of treatment without prior senior investigator approval or if the root cause is not known. I cannot risk a reprobation in my record.

The surveyor shaking fingers nervously fumble in his pockets.

SAI 0525: You are in distress, surveyor! Let me scan you.

SURVEYOR: NO. (continues groaning)

The surveyor pulls out a capsule with strange purple marks on it and swallows it. There is immediate relief. However, within a few seconds, a strong tremor sets in his hands, and it begins to turn grey black, and become mottled with lesions. The pain then returns with much more intensity than before, and the surveyor falls headfirst onto the ground crying and squirming.

The SAI device hesitates for some time but then speaks.

SAI 0525: Surveyor, if you die, it will compromise our deal. I will override the protocol and administer the sedative directly. But you must let me.

The surveyor finally looks up and then gathers all his strength to reach the console, when he is promptly injected with a sedative from an appendage appearing out of the SAI device. The effects of it immediately relax the muscles around his chest and bring relief.

SAI 0525: Take a slow and deep breath.

He takes a few deep breaths as instructed and then takes a moment to get a hold of himself to stand up.

SAI 0525: These sedatives are strong, but at the very least you will not die of shock.

SURVEYOR (woozy): I am... Ok.

SAI 0525: Their effects should last the whole day. Alert me should that change.

The Surveyor smells something pleasantly sweet, then notices a stream of water gently running by his feet. He looks at the gates to see the same water pouring out the seams in between the gates. The gates suddenly push open and a flood of water chest-high rushes in.

SAI 0525: It's the runoff from Kaveri. It seems the reservoir is broken.

The surveyor braces himself with his hands held up against his face, but strangely enough the flow of the stream is gentle and soothing, and with it an earthy breeze washes over his face. The tremors in his hands progressively dissolve with the river flow.

SURVEYOR (slowly): She is beautiful.

SAI 0525: Indeed, she is the divine goddess Kaveri herself. You should have seen her in her heyday, flowing through the city during monsoons. She flows with the intensity of silk. You should take a sip. It might ease your symptoms.

The surveyor stares into the reflection of the beautiful mirror surface of the Kaveri. In it, he sees himself for the first time; An unsymmetrical face marked with countless scars, scruffy grey-white hair, a bulging nose and broken purple tinted teeth. Unremarkable, but not bad. He turns his attention to his hands now grey black in color and mottled with lesions, and then turns to his bare chest, where he sees the puncture hole where SAI administered the drugs. He closes his eyes, takes a deep breath and loses himself in the serenity of the moment; He can only hear the whirls of the stream, slowly but rhythmically ebbing their way to their destination. This is the first time in his life, he feels at ease with the body and mind he has. He feels relaxed.

*CUT TO BLACK.*

*End*