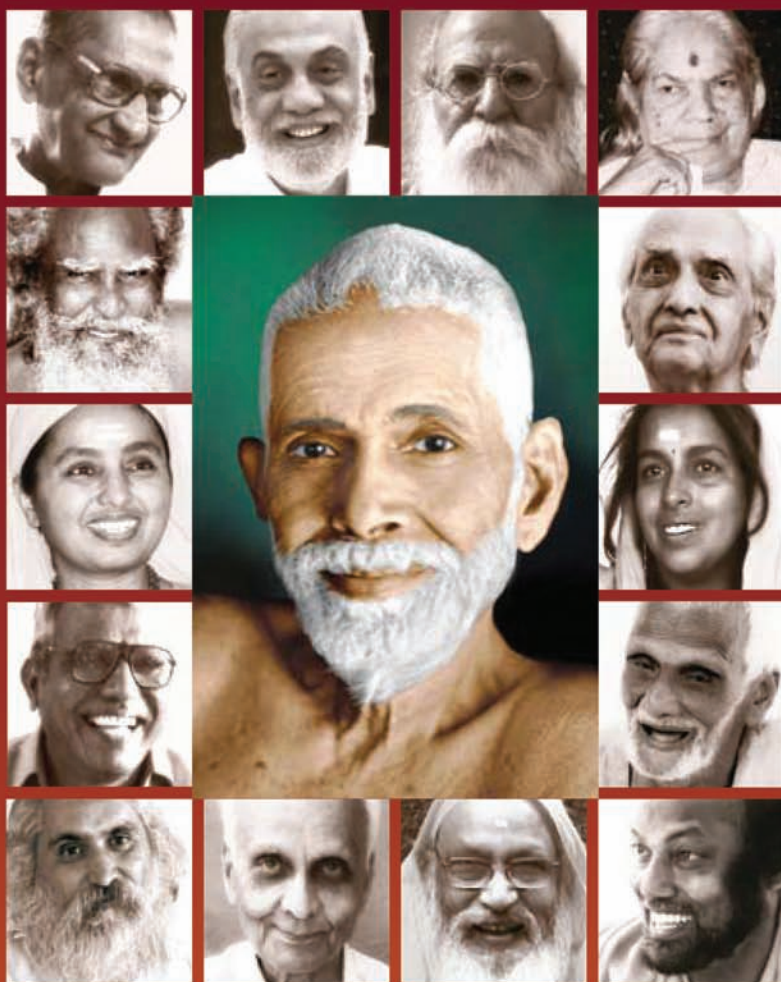


INDIAN MASTERS

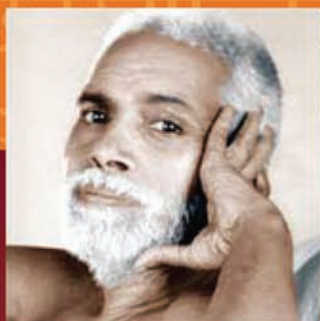


Blueprints *for* Awakening

Rare Dialogues with 16 Indian Masters
on the Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Premananda

DVD Sampler
inside



Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, the Sage of Arunachala, born in 1878, is one of the most famous and most recent of India's wealth of sages, Saints and spiritual Masters.

As a young man of sixteen he had a spontaneous awakening. He left his home in Madurai and made his way to Tiruvannamalai and the holy mountain, Arunachala. He lived for many years, alone and in silence, on and around the mountain, which he never left. In the 1920s the present ashram was constructed. Here he lived and taught until his death in 1950.

Many of this Maha Rishi's (great seer) students and devotees, who, through him gained Self-realisation, passed on to their own students Sri Ramana Maharshi's practice of Self-enquiry, using the question, 'Who am I?'

www.ramana-maharshi.org

Blueprints *for* Awakening

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Face to Face with Ramana

Blueprints *for* Awakening

Rare dialogues with sixteen Indian Masters
on the Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Premananda



OPEN SKY PRESS
www.openskypress.com

Blueprints for Awakening

Published by Open Sky Press Ltd.
483 Green Lanes, London N13 4BS
office@openskypress.com

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For further information please contact Open Sky Press.

First edition

© Open Sky Press Ltd. 2008

ISBN 978-0-9555730-4-0

Cover design by Devi.
Photographs from Sri Ramana Maharshi Ashram: cover, front flap.
All other photographs from Open Sky House archive.

Printed in Hong Kong



OPEN SKY PRESS
www.openskypress.com

Acknowledgements

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my two direct Masters, Osho and H.W.L. Poonja. Without my twenty years sitting at their feet, this book could not exist. Sri Ramana Maharshi came into my life quietly and invisibly, gradually becoming my main inspiration and guide.

My gratitude also goes to all the exceptional Masters who gave their time to meet me and later to proof read their *Blueprints for Awakening* interview. Their availability to meet so many people as part of the annual Arunachala Pilgrimage Retreat gave the opportunity to collect more footage for the film, *Blueprints for Awakening – Wisdom of the Masters*, and the series of sixteen films, *Blueprints for Awakening – Meeting the Master*, the companion films to this book.

An interview is a spontaneous and unique conversation. My thanks to Kali Devi for her sensitive editing of the interview transcripts, accurately produced by Aruna and Meenakshi from the original recordings. To Kali Devi and Jyoti for patiently proof reading the manuscript over and over again! To Mahima and Saraswati who, while translating this book into German, added the final touches.

I should like to thank Sri V.S. Ramanan, the president of Sri Ramana Ashram, for permission to use photographs of Sri Ramana Maharshi and the text from *Who Am I?* Also Kali Devi, Jyoti and Darshana who have taken the majority of the photos that have not been taken from the films as stills. Swamini Pramananda, who, besides being one of the Masters interviewed for the book, gave her expert advice on compiling the *Sanskrit* glossary. Swami Suddhananda stepped in at the last minute and produced a foreword which greatly adds background to the teachings revealed in the interviews. Thank you.

Thanks go to Arjuna for creating the Video Website, allowing so many short videos extracts from the interviews to be available, to Devi and Parvati for the graphic design of the numerous art pages and to Shivananda for his fine graphic advice and support with the cover design.

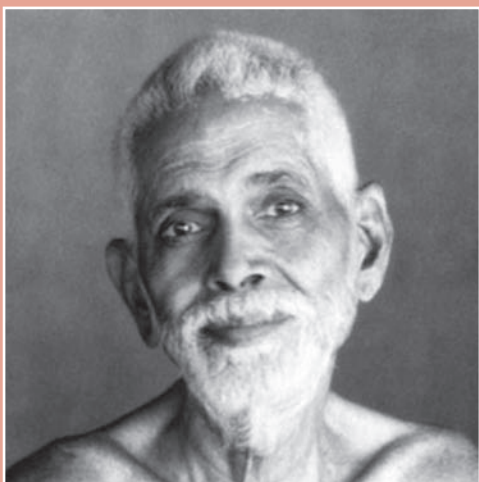
Thank you to Darshana for her great work on *Blueprints for Awakening – Wisdom of the Masters*, the book's companion film, and the series of sixteen films, *Blueprints for Awakening – Meeting the Master*. In addition, for her translation and proof reading skills and for always being ready to give aesthetic advice.

My heartfelt thanks to all the residents of the Open Sky House Community for giving such loving, energetic support, creating a space for all those working actively on the book and films, and to Shanti Devi for feeding our team of eight people during our two months on the beach polishing and finishing up the book.

Finally my deep thanks and appreciation to Parvati and Kali Devi, the directors of Open Sky Press, for their painstakingly careful work and consistent support in every facet of this project. Parvati formatted the book and supervised our printer in a style that has produced such a fine quality. She has truly been invaluable.

Premananda 2008

Bhagavan Sri
Ramana Maharshi



*I dedicate this book to
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi,
the sage of Arunachala. He came into my life
quietly, imperceptibly, through a photograph
twenty years ago, and has become a central
inspiration in my life.*

*Thank you for the exemplary life you led
and for the simplicity and clarity with which
you guide us. The question, 'Who am I?' has
provided a golden key to all who wish to know
their essential nature.*

Interview Questions

These questions are designed to unfold and explain the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, as set out in his original booklets *Who Am I?** and *Self-Enquiry*. I believe these teachings reflect the ancient Indian wisdom.

- 1 Sri Ramana proposed the fundamental question, ‘Who am I?’* Who are you?
- 2 Many Western seekers come to India looking for enlightenment as if it is an experience. What is enlightenment?
- 3 Are there any qualifications for enlightenment? Is *sadhana* (spiritual practice) necessary? If yes, what form do you advise?
- 4 Sri Ramana said that Self-enquiry is the most direct route to realising the Self. What do you say about Self-enquiry? How to conduct Self-enquiry?
- 5 When Sri Ramana was asked, ‘When will the realisation of the Self be gained?’ he replied, ‘When the world which is what-is-seen has been removed, there will be realisation of the Self which is the seer.’* What is the true understanding of the world? How to remove the world?
- 6 It has been suggested that the mind must be destroyed for liberation to occur. Do you have a mind? Sri Ramana used the term *manonasha* to describe the state of liberation, meaning destroyed mind. How to destroy the mind?
- 7 What about *vasanas*, the tendencies of the mind? Must these be removed before Self-realisation can become permanent? Is it enough to achieve a *sattvic* (calm and peaceful) state of mind and to know one’s *vasanas* so that they no longer bind? How to remove the *vasanas*?
- 8 At the end of his book, *Self-Enquiry*, Sri Ramana says, ‘He who is thus endowed with a mind that has become subtle, and who has the experience of the Self is called a *jivanmukta*.’ Is this the state that can be called Self-realised?

He goes on, ‘And when one is immersed in the ocean of bliss and has become one with it without any differentiated existence, one is called a *videhamukta*. It is the state of *videhamukti* that is referred to as the transcendent *turiya* (state). This is the final goal.’ Is this the state that can be called enlightenment?
- 9 It appears essential to meet a *guru* and stay with that *guru*. Who is the *guru*? What is the *guru*’s role? How to recognise a true *guru*?
- 10 Sri Ramana’s devotees had tremendous devotion to him, and he to Arunachala. Please say something about *bhakti*, devotion, in the pursuit of awakening.
- 11 Seekers often have curious ideas about the enlightened state. Please describe your typical day and how you perceive the world.
- 12 You have given us a profound discourse on awakening. When you meet someone with a passion for awakening, what would your short advice be?

* Original text *Who Am I?* at the end of this book.

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Introduction

Blueprints for Awakening is for everyone who has an inner passion to know who they are and what they are doing here as a human being. It is for all who ask the question 'Who am I?' and for those who are looking for guidance on the teaching of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi to 'be as you are'. It covers the main issues that arise on a spiritual seeker's journey to awakening to their essential nature, to Truth. It delves into the fascinating depths of the Indian spiritual tradition, and, in that sense, it follows in the footsteps of the famous book by Paul Brunton, *A Search in Secret India*.

Twelve questions have been asked of sixteen Indian Masters who have crossed my path in the last five years. I did not approach them as a seeker, but rather as a teacher wishing to clarify my own understanding and to offer a platform for each Master to give his or her blueprint to be put out into the world, a world in great need, and, hopefully, a world where these teachings will find a receptive audience. The questions are referenced to Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings, even though the intention is for each Master to express his or her own teaching blueprint. Naturally, there is no actual blueprint as each person's spiritual journey is unique.

My own Master was Papaji, who met his Master, Sri Ramana Maharshi, in the 1940s. Sri Ramana came into my life through an original Welling portrait that I found in a pile of debris in a room I had rented in the years before I met Papaji. During my five years with Papaji he greeted a photograph of Sri Ramana every morning, and on occasion said that he spoke as a channel for him. In the last ten years many Western *Advaita* teachers have begun teaching in the world. Sri Ramana Maharshi is the spiritual inspiration for most of them.

During the last years of Sri Ramana's life, a small number of Westerners made it to his *ashram*, most attracted by Paul Brunton's book:

There are moments when I feel this power of his so greatly that I know that he has only to issue the most disturbing command and I will readily obey it. But the Maharshi is the last person in the world to place his followers in the chain of servile obedience, and allows everyone the utmost freedom of action. In this respect he is quite refreshingly different from most of the teachers and yogis I have met in India.

Maurice Frydman, the editor of *I am That*, the teachings of Nisargadatta Maharaj, visited Sri Ramana in 1943. He was clearly impressed:

It was the immense privilege of the writer to meet a few gigantic spiritual men, but nobody ever produced on him a deeper impression than Ramana Maharshi. In him the sublime majesty of the divine life stood and moved in all simplicity. The ultimate had revealed itself as the immediate, and the undreamt had become the actual.

The idea for this book, and particularly the films, came to me in 1993, while living in Lucknow, North India, in the *sangha* (spiritual community) of my Master, Papaji. One day I received an inner message or vision telling me to go and catch the great Indian Masters on film before they were lost to the world. I was deeply touched, but had no idea how to carry out such a task. Ten years later, after five years living in Australia, I was on my way to Europe. In between I took a personal retreat of one year in southern India, in Tiruvannamalai, at the holy mountain, Arunachala.

During my stay I made a series of interviews with David Godman, the well-known editor of Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings published as *Be As You Are*, and author of other important books on Indian *gurus*. The interviews were about the life, teachings and devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. These interviews will be published by Open Sky Press in 2008 as *Arunachala Shiva*. During our dialogues, David insisted that Ramana's greatness came from the fact that his mind had been

destroyed (*manonasha*), and that he spoke from the Self, like a wireless. While being sympathetic to this notion I had doubts about whether it was possible to be alive and have a destroyed mind. This short excerpt from David Godman in *Arunachala Shiva* sparked my curiosity and was the seed from which this book grew. My question to him was:

You say that in realisation the mind is dead, but wouldn't such a person be a zombie?

This is a misconception that many people have because they can't imagine how anyone can function, take decisions, speak, and so on, without a mind. You do all these things with your mind, or at least you think you do, so when you see a sage behaving normally in the world, you automatically assume that he too is coordinating all his activities through an entity called 'mind'. In his written works, Bhagavan uses the term manonasha to describe the state of liberation. It means, quite unequivocally, 'destroyed mind'.

As this notion is also believed by many of the world's seekers, such as Buddhist monks searching for no-mind, I had the idea to approach different Masters and ask them what they thought about this issue. D.B. Gangolli sums up the response of most of the Masters:

The mind cannot exist apart from the Self. It is a projection. But at the same time it is a misconception, a false appearance. So there is no question of destruction of the mind. Many people, including Ramana Maharshi, talk about this manonasha, but it is not the correct word. Manonigra can be used. Manonigra means you give up the identification with the mind.

This is supported by Swami Dayananda Saraswati:

Manonasha is the isolation and destruction of this I that alienates you from everything else. The mind is reduced to I, and that I alienates you from everything else. When they say 'no-mind', what do they mean? They mean 'thought-free mind'. A 'thought-free mind' is an empty mind.

And by Ramesh Balsekar:

*Mind is something which any person requires to live in this world.
What the sages mean when they say the ego has to be destroyed
– but for some reason don't bother to make clear – is that doership
in the ego has to be destroyed.*

With this issue as a basic question, I met with sixteen Masters, several of them already well-known in the world, Hans Raj Maharaj, Ramesh Balsekar and Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Others are hardly known, Sri Brahmam and Ma Souris. Others, like Ganesan and Radha Ma, would be surprised to hear themselves referred to as Masters. Several run large *ashrams*, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Satchidananda and Swami Suddhananda. Thuli Baba and Sri Nannagaru choose to be available mainly for Indian seekers. Since the interviews, Ajja, Kiran, D.B. Gangolli and Ma Souris have left their bodies. It is lovely that there are three women, Ma Souris, Radha Ma and Swamini Pramananda. Several of the Masters have become dear friends who have graciously allowed me to introduce many people to them during my annual Arunachala Pilgrimage Retreat. Additional material gathered at these later meetings has been included with the original interviews.

The basic structure of each interview uses the same twelve questions (see Interview Questions in front of book). However, being with an Indian Master is very different from asking a professor to explain his teaching. In each interview there was the strong energy of the Master's presence and often he or she was surrounded by a large group of devotees. In the very first interviews, the questions were not yet firmly set. Later, questions were added and further questions were asked spontaneously to illuminate an answer, leading to many exceptions to the basic twelve-question structure.

The Master's presence was always felt to add an extra, vital dimension to the interview and I searched for a way to include this presence in the book. Hence you will find a DVD Sampler in the back of this book. It contains part of a Video Website, www.blueprintsforawakening.org, a set of Masters' Portraits and a trailer for *Blueprints for Awakening – Wisdom of the Masters*, the companion film of this book. This film

includes selections from all sixteen interviews and sets out important aspects of the teachings presented in this book. A series of sixteen separate films, *Blueprints for Awakening – Meeting the Master*, showing each Master's complete interview as well as material filmed during subsequent visits, will also be available. This set of seventeen films and the Video Website create a unique archive for those wishing to taste the Indian spiritual tradition through the grace of these Masters.

Many of the Masters come from the ancient tradition of *Vedanta*, a metaphysical Indian philosophy derived from the *Upanishads*, and from *Advaita Vedanta*, a non-dual school of *Vedanta* philosophy, whose chief spokesman was *Adi Shankara*, teaching the Oneness of God, soul and the universe. The exceptions are Kiran and Samdarshi, whose Master was Osho; Swami Satchidananda, who served both Papa Ramdas and Mother Krishnabai; and Ramesh Balsekar, who was with Nisargadatta Maharaj but also had a strong connection with Sri Ramana Maharshi.

All the Masters, particularly the *Vedanta* Masters, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, D.B. Gangolli, Swamini Pramananda and Swami Suddhananda, use *Sanskrit* terms. *Sanskrit*, the ancient language of *Vedic* philosophy, with its unparalleled richness of expression, has been considered the language of the gods. You will find an English explanation with each *Sanskrit* word the first time it appears in each chapter. The comprehensive glossary gives a more detailed explanation of the italicised *Sanskrit* words.

While writing this introduction, I recognise the depth of the spiritual wisdom contained in this book, the films and the Video Website. It is a valuable archive and I am pleased that I have been able to manifest the original vision that came to me fifteen years ago. It was a timely call to action as four of the Masters have since left their bodies. This archive directly concerns Indian Masters, but, as Maharaj says, spirituality is One. With this understanding, I have sought out Western Masters and will publish their wisdom in a second volume in 2009. This is the ancient wisdom of humanity passed down through generations of Masters and their disciples.

Premananda 2008

Foreword

Swami Suddhananda

Writing about Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, or any great sage, is like celebrating the magnificent embodiment of the eternal, formless, absolute existence. They are such beautiful icons, where nature or God seems to have excelled its own excellence. When a majestic mountain range or a vast expanse of blue ocean can throw us back into ourselves without our knowledge, the great sages, with their living, their action, their speech and their every movement, can consciously take us to the same place.

One such sage in recent times was Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. As time passes, many great sages become legendary, almost to the point of becoming mythological, as the average man cannot even comprehend the possibility of the infinite wisdom they lived and loved as their own true nature. Slowly and steadily, Ramana Maharshi too shall be part of that legend, but at this moment in history he is still fresh in the minds of many as he was alive and well fifty-eight years ago, to be exact! There are still some people, children in those days, to whom Bhagavan appeared as a loving grandfather figure. They enjoyed the whole atmosphere around Sri Ramana without realising the mighty presence that he was, is and shall always be!

Though attempts have been made to present Sri Ramana as a very exclusive phenomenon, everything about him showed the possibility of every person understanding the Truth that he realised as a tender teenager. He was ever ordinary, commonplace, simple and innocent, which is a natural expression of an extra-ordinary yet commonplace existence! Whether in the caves, in the solitary confinement of the temple premises, in the *ashram*, in the kitchen, interacting with the cowherds, playing with children, playing with cow Laxmi, feeding the monkeys, or discoursing with very learned and orthodox minds or

secular people, he was always himself – the unhurried, the ever restful, the quiet, overwhelming presence.

That is why the memories and memoirs are full of such lovingly tender human anecdotes where Sri Ramana never made any attempt to make himself exclusive or dismissed anything frivolously. Never was there an attempt on his part to erase any part of his life or to whitewash everything as pure and sacred. He was a child from a faraway village in Tamil Nadu, growing up in a town called Madurai, exposed to the timeless traditions of *sanatana dharma* (Hinduism) in the temple celebrations and in his loving family.

Curious to know about death, the innocent youngster puts himself into physical stillness, leading ultimately to a stillness within, where everything appears to subside, yet a Presence continues without any movement at the level of thought and the body. The incident had an unforgettable impact on the innocent youngster who held and maintained it. It was only later he found the description of that state in the lives and the writings of great saints.

The immediate family, and the great tradition which talks about renunciation, vision, realisation, wisdom, the sages and the exploits of gods in all names and forms, drew the youngster to Arunachala mountain in Tiruvannamalai. As they say, the rest is history. Spending days, months and years in solitude, he found the reflections of his understanding in the writings of many sages, gloriously described in rich Tamil and *Sanskrit* literature.

Later on, with the little formal education that he had before undertaking this great pilgrimage, Sri Ramana went on to master many languages to express his vision, the Self that he was, is and shall always be. His modes of expression in different languages were shaped not only by the great Tamil saints but also by the writings of *Adi Shankara*. He was already aware of the Truth before learning to express it in any language.

In the great teaching tradition of the *Upanishads* (ancient Indian scriptures), the scriptures and teachers just ‘point out’ the Truth, the knowledge, the experience that every person always ‘is’, but is never aware of. The greatness and the blessing Bhagavan Ramana had as a youngster

was to hold onto and maintain that something that everybody 'is' all the time but never gives any importance to. When somebody finds 'it', it is not even 'near' as it is one's own Self. When somebody looks for 'it', it is always far away as one is denying it as one's own Self by looking for it. One who does not look for it never finds it either.

Bhagavan Ramana himself would never have opened his mouth to speak, or attempted to write, had he supported the idea that no teacher, teaching, realising or thinking is needed to appreciate one's own Self. He himself was an exceptional young man to be in touch with himself accidentally, and to maintain this, but he was supremely ordinary enough to acknowledge the human need to be taught, and therefore was a compassionate teacher in his living, speaking and writing. In his day-to-day dialogue he was always hitting the bull's eye, directly moving into the 'I'. He has taken extraordinary care in his writings to deal with problems faced by the average man in the relative world. He was indeed a great blossom in the living tradition of teaching.

The beauty of the timeless tradition of the ancient wisdom, still alive in India, is that no teacher or *guru* considers himself or herself in any way exclusive. The Truth is eternal and nobody 'creates' it. Since the Truth is timeless, and therefore existing at all times, in all places, in and through everything, it is the nature of every existing object, sentient and insentient. Hence, nobody can 'give' it to another. It is already the nature of everything and everybody.

But not many are aware of this. Everybody can grasp that they are ignorant about the world, but not many can grasp that there is ignorance about one's own Self. We question the perceptions or experiences but never question the perceiver or the experiencer. If questioning or challenging the perceptions marks the beginning of science, then challenging 'the perceiver', the 'I', marks the beginning of real thinking where the thinker himself is challenged. There are millions of people who never question their perceptions, but there are billions who never question the perceiver, the thoughts or the thinker. As a result, the vast majority of human beings live under the spell of ignorance.

This ignorance is of two kinds – ignorance about the relative, the objective world, and ignorance about the subject, the absolute. It

is easier to grasp the first kind of ignorance as everybody encounters the objective world everyday. Though we ‘experience’ objects directly through our senses, still we do not ‘know’ those objects. The experience may be effortless – one may see a tree, a mountain, an ocean or a person, but unless it is named, nobody ‘knows’ which tree, mountain, ocean or person one experienced. The more creation is explored and named, the more aware a person becomes of his ignorance about many things.

In our generation, we feel so strongly about our ignorance of the relative world that we forget the most important, second type of ignorance: the ignorance about our own Selves. Not many of us are aware that we are ignorant about our true nature – the Self, the ‘I’! Until something is ‘named’ we do not even know that we are ignorant about that something.

If we are asked: Do you know yourself, the ‘I’? there shall be answers at various levels. I am continuously using and experiencing my sense of ‘being’ without a name, the nameless being, yet the name ‘I’ will throw anybody out of gear with a sudden awakening to ignorance, as nobody can give ‘a’ specific meaning to the word ‘I’. The word ‘I’ is peculiar in that it has two levels of meaning – the relative and the absolute.

There are many answers to the question, ‘Who am I?’ Everybody will begin with the same word in any language. In English we begin with ‘I am...’ and then we fill the gap with some object or relative identity. The ‘I’ and the ‘amness’ are one and the same.

The subject ‘I’, the universal first name, is the same for all. But the object, the relative identities, the second names, are just countless. I am rich, poor, young, old, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, a socialist, a monarchist. Thus, there can be thousands of relative identities. Long before we pick up any secular or religious identity, we already exist. Our sense of ‘being’, the existence itself, is not a matter of belief or disbelief to be picked up sometime later in life. Nor does it need the name ‘I’ for its existence. The existence of anything is independent of a name, and in the same way, who I am, the being, the ‘I’, is a nameless existence, independent of a name.

Not only is it ever-existent, but also it is a continuing ‘experience’ as all experiences at the level of the senses, and even thoughts of all kinds,

are experienced in its absolute presence. A sound, a touch, a sight, a taste or a smell is 'experienced' through corresponding sense organs to invoke sensations at the level of the body and impressions at the level of the thoughts. But 'the Experience', the Self, the awareness, is ever an experience, even before it is named as 'I'. That or this nameless being which is always 'the subject', and is never available for objectification, is an eternal Experience that everybody or everything 'is'!

The *Vedas* (ancient Indian *Sanskrit* texts), the *Upanishads*, the most ancient literature, the common heritage of mankind, reveal this Truth with many words, ever aware of the limitation of the words. Even though every person is always in that experience, nobody knows about that, just as we forget the planet Earth while living in our village, city, country or continent. While listening to the sound we forget our ears, while enjoying the sights we forget our ever-present eyes behind the sights, or we forget the ever-present tongue that processes the taste while enjoying various taste sensations.

Similarly, we seem to forget the ever-present Experience, the eternal awareness Existence, while losing ourselves in the sensations of various physical experiences and the feeling experiences of many thoughts and emotions. We always use our 'being', 'the Experience', long before we experience the experience of a sound, touch, taste, sight, smell, thoughts or emotions. Long before we see the word 'I' in any relative identity, we are already 'being' ourselves.

The knowledge of the Self is like the man sitting on the donkey looking for the donkey. The moment he searches for the donkey, he denies that he is the owner of the donkey. If he does not search, he does not find the donkey either. Similarly, in the search for happiness, the Self, the Infinite, the God, the Truth, one denies that one is That, and if one stops searching one does not find That either.

This is the point where the need for a *guru* comes in. The *guru* dispels the darkness or ignorance about one's own nature. The geography book does not 'create' the country or the landscape it talks about, and the *Upanishads* or the *Vedas* do not 'produce' the Truth that they reveal. The Truth, the Self, the God, does not exist because of the *Upanishads*; because That is, the book talks about it. Similarly, I am the Infinite,

the Absolute, not because the *guru* says so; because I am That, the *guru* reveals it. Thus no book or *guru* becomes the authority.

But the knowledge, the *jnana*, must be freed from both doubt and error. Often we have doubt-free knowledge, but it can be erroneous. We may have no doubt that the earth is flat, but it is erroneous as the earth is round. Science begins with the doubting of perceptions. If we take for granted that the earth is flat, stationary, or the center of the solar system, then we shall continue to remain under the spell of ignorance.

Similarly, the knowledge about one's own Self. We may have no doubt that 'I am the body', but it is erroneous as 'I' goes on shifting from 'I am the body' to 'I am the mind', 'I am the father, mother, professional', 'I am sick, healthy...' Thus this shifting 'I' is to be understood.

When the individual starts doubting the 'I' that takes so many roles, it marks the beginning of true knowledge about the Self. The *guru* takes into account the ever-changing roles and the changeless constant that is the 'I', to prove the immortality of one's 'being'. Logic is used to establish that long before the name was attributed, the nameless universe was already existing. That goes to prove that long before the universal first name, 'I', was used, the nameless being pervaded it all.

Somebody is always needed to challenge the perceptions, thoughts and individuality as most people take all these aspects for granted and never question them. When this false knowledge is given a religious sanction, in the long march of time the error is hardened as the true knowledge, and the followers become fanatical. Nobody must hide behind the infallibility of a past declaration, as that will prevent every chance of opening up to immortality from mortality, absolute peak from misery, and light of knowledge from the darkness of ignorance.

The *Upanishads* challenge the individual 'I', as that is the focal point where all identity happens. That the body is changing or ageing is natural, but 'I am changing' is an error. The teaching and the teacher facilitate the understanding of the 'I' to its true, absolute identity, and then the person learns to live and to manage with all the changes. When the knowledge of the objective world helps us to learn to use the creation more efficiently, the knowledge of the subject, the 'I', helps us to deal with all thoughts, including the 'I' thought, and the emotions, very effectively.

The Self-knowledge, the awareness of one's own true nature, does not impose any type of identity, but reveals 'the actor', the immortal, the absolute peace, who infuses every role with the touch of absolute bliss. The *guru* reveals it. A teacher or *guru* is absolutely essential. The scriptures point it out and then drop out of one's life for the person to live out his wisdom in perfect harmony with creation. It is like the driving instructor teaching driving then dropping out of one's car for the learner to drive around to his own destinations.

The relative world can ever remain a domain of constant exploration and discovery, but the absolute identity of man is known once and for all. This is '*Vedanta*', the end of all knowledge. There is nothing to know 'beyond' the Infinite, as the Infinite is all that ever 'is'! But the finite world can always be explored and the horizon of the relative knowledge shall be an ever-expanding realm!

Vedanta, the *Upanishads*, the most ancient literature, begins with the 'i', the individual, to end in 'I', the Infinite. The true teachers in the tradition reveal that Infinite to be the 'I', the individual, and to be all inclusive, where nothing or nobody stands apart. Such teachers will have no conflict with anybody or any idea whereas the ones who believe in one relative idea or identity as the Absolute shall inevitably end up in conflict. One pays a huge price by remaining sheltered, unquestioned and unchallenged in one's own unverified and unverifiable convictions.

Most of the thinkers, theologies or belief systems are busy explaining the creation or the creator, but not many begin with the 'I', the individual whose presence makes the creation and the creator a mystery. As the world shrinks with globalised communication, few can stand apart in isolation. The time has come for the world to open up, and teachers of all persuasions must be open enough to challenge and be challenged, taking into account all shades of human experiences, and never hiding behind an idea, a person, a book or anything that is beyond questioning or analysis! Absolute openness is the name of the teaching, learning and living. We can be grateful in having Bhagavan Ramana as an ever-present reminder.

Swami Suddhananda 2008

Sri Hans Raj Maharaj

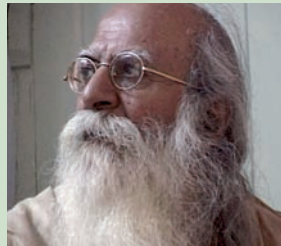


You try to purify yourself by the grace of guru but you can't purify yourself; you have to take help from a guru. If you have the utmost demand for realisation you will get a guru. Until you have extreme demand for realisation you will not get a guru.

MAHARAJ

If you have extreme desire to realise, your guru will come.

Sri Hans Raj Maharaj



Sri Hans Raj Maharaj

Sacha Dham, Holy Place of Truth, is the *ashram* of Sri Hans Raj Maharaj. It is located in the tiny village of Laxman Jhulla, near Rishikesh, North India, on the banks of the rushing waters of the sacred Ganges river. It is a small and simple place, providing a home for Maharajji, his Indian disciples and their families. It's a very traditional Indian *ashram*.

I visited Maharaj in 2000 with a group of students from Australia. We glimpsed him over several days going to and fro to take darshan (being in the presence of a saint) at the shrine of his master. There was a strong attraction and we were granted the rare honour of sitting with him in his room for some twenty minutes. He answered one question, briefly, and it clearly sets out his Blueprint for Awakening. We were all deeply touched by his enormous presence.

We're living in Sydney, Australia. It's a very beautiful city, but it is very materialistic. Is there something you would like to say to the people of Sydney? Is there a message we could take to them?

I have only one message – spirituality. That is called peace. Love is not in the mind and thoughts. Love is in the heart, and that is universal. Maybe in Sydney, maybe in France, maybe in England, maybe another country – spirituality is not particular to any country.

Spirituality is the universal point. Whether it's Christ's way, Mohammed's way, Ram or Krishna's way, everybody understand one thing – love is God. Christ also said this. Mohammed also said this.

So if you want to realise God, first you have to look inside. Don't look at other people; you have so many egos inside. Do you understand?

You try to purify yourself by the grace of *guru* but you can't purify yourself; you have to take help from a *guru*. If you have the utmost demand for realisation you will get a *guru*. Until you have extreme demand for realisation you will not get a *guru*.

When you get a *guru* he will open your heart. Love is open. Heart is universal to every country. You belong to Australia, another man belongs to England, another to America, another to India. But spirituality is not for a particular country or for a particular religion. Spirituality is universal and One. God is One.

For each person, *sadhana* (spiritual practice), meditation and all other things are different! Somebody sings a song, somebody does *pranayama* (breath control), somebody else does *yoga*. But the ultimate goal is One.

You have to go inside, to your ego, and that ego will be removed by the grace of the *guru*, by the help of the *guru*. You can't remove that ego with your own effort. You have to search first for a *guru*. Then you will get realisation, peace, and love.

Just like dirty water that is connected with the Ganges; the Ganges automatically purifies that water. Understand? The Ganges will not come to the dirty water. The dirty water will come to the Ganges.

If you have extreme desire to realise, your *guru* will come. Your *guru* will meet you and he will give you peace. He will open your heart.

There may be a method. Maybe you go in Christ's way, a Mohammedan goes in his own way, a Hindu goes his own way. But God is One. Ultimately, the goal is One.

So, for Sydney no special message. (both laugh) As I am a spiritual man, my message is the same for every country.

Premananda, you explain to these people what I am telling you. You understand English. You explain all this that I am saying. If you have extreme desire to realise, you will get a *guru*.

Take this *prasad* (sweet food offered by the *guru*). Come on everybody. Immediately! (handing out *prasad* to everybody)