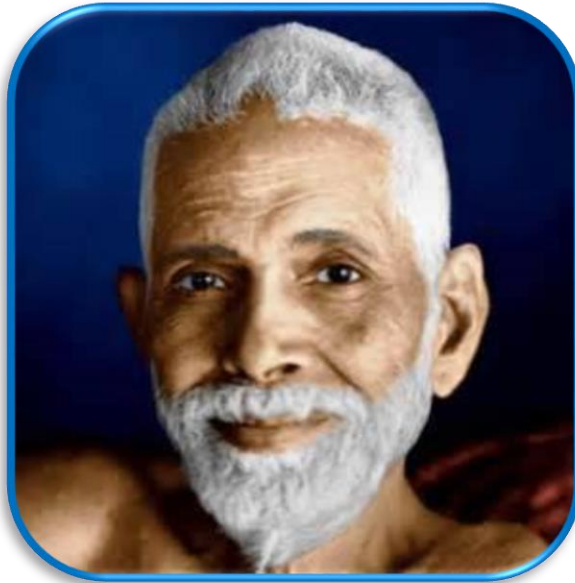


I am Awareness



**Non-duality for beginners
and enders...**

**The teachings of Ramana Maharshi
and other Self-realised Beings
as compiled by
Pieter van der Westhuyzen**

**You cannot see me,
you cannot touch me
and you cannot think me,
but I do exist.**

**You may feel me,
you may know me,
when your Heart is open.**

**Then I am closer than close,
more obvious than the world.**

**If you would live
without interruption to your joy;
with peace, disturbed not even,
by the gentle waves of bliss,
lapping quietly
in the recesses of the silent mind.**

**Then you must know
That I Am,
the One and only,
I Am.**

**Partake of my Presence,
For I am your homecoming,
your satisfaction,
your rest.**

Your Self.

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Introduction

I used to wonder what life was truly all about, why I was here and how I could find lasting happiness; how to end suffering and achieve the most fulfilling life possible. I sought the meaning of life in many places and found parts of it here and there; coming to see, eventually, that there is a common denominator in what is being said by the wisest and most awakened beings on this planet, going back as far as history will reveal.

By an act of sheer grace I came upon the teachings of Ramana Maharshi, whereupon my search was brought to a halt. Instead of continuing the process of seeking, I was finally able to perceive the truth of the matter and then feel into and deepen my experience of what already is, as I already am. This understanding brought a new perspective on “my part” in the scheme of things.

Not that “my work” and “my effort” have ended, by any means, for Life itself continues and what would a play be without its actors, or a dream without its characters? However, the search for the path that leads to enlightenment has come to an end, in the recognition that there is only one, all-pervading Energy at play in this Reality and I am nothing but That.

The true nature of my Self becomes increasingly evident in this unfolding dream called Life and I am deeply grateful for the illuminating words of the gentle and loving Sage, known as Ramana.

As a sixteen year old schoolboy, Ramana underwent an inner awakening that totally transformed his perspective on life. There are slightly varying accounts of what happened on that fateful day and here’s the one that I find most convincing. Ramana was staying at his uncle’s home, where he suddenly had to cease all activity and head for his room; because he felt an overwhelming, certain knowledge that he was about to die.

He could feel his bodily energy fading fast and so he went and lay down on his bed, in readiness for the death of the body. It did not occur to him to consult a doctor, or his elders; he had to deal with it then and there, on his own. The shock of the fear of death drove his mind inwards and he asked himself, mentally: "Now death is coming, what does it mean? Who is dying?" An internal response arose to the effect: "This body dies, but the Spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. I am that deathless Spirit."

He lay with his legs stretched out stiffly, as if in rigor mortis, then he felt the body's breathing come to a halt and the heart stopped. His perception was that this lasted for some fifteen to twenty minutes, during which time he felt the heart energy move to the right side of the chest, a place that he later referred to as the "spiritual heart". He felt the life force draining from the body and waited in anticipation for the corpse to be discovered and then taken to be cremated, on a funeral pyre. *With this knowledge came the direct and simultaneous perception that the full force of his presence continued, despite the absence of body-consciousness, or the ability to influence this dead body.*

Then, with a jolt, the life force was felt to leave its abode on the right side of the chest and re-enter the physical heart, on the left. Gradually he sat up and was able to resume normal bodily function, albeit with a radically altered perspective.

For starters, this experience had erased any fear of death, once and for all. In its place was the absolute conviction that he was, is and always will be, the deathless Spirit. He realised that the "I" within, was something very real, in fact the *only* real thing about his present state. All of the conscious activity connected with his body was centred on that "I".

Absorption, in what he called *the Self*, continued unbroken within him, from that moment onwards. Soon after this transformative experience, he left school, friends, home and family to travel, by train, to a holy mountain in Southern India, named Arunachala, "the mountain of abiding light".

Upon arriving at the nearby town of Tiruvannamalai he entered the dark basement of the main temple, where he could focus on peace and be quiet, letting the world fall away. There he sat in silent bliss, until eventually he was discovered by rats, which came to nibble at his flesh and then later also by children; who were playing hide and go seek in the basement and upon discovering him poked him with sticks and tossed stones at him, surprised that a child of their age should be sitting there, "like a yogi".

Although he was not disturbed by these unwanted guests, they did attract the attention of the temple guards, who thankfully removed him from the unhealthy attention of the rats and the children - placing him, instead, within reach of those who could sense a palpable peace emanating from him. His caretakers fed him and moved him to ever greater safety and seclusion, including various caves at the foothills of the sacred mountain; where people would gather around him to find their own stillness and receive his teachings in silence.

His mother, who had been searching for him for many months, found him and upon realising that she could not persuade him to return home, became one of his most avid devotees. Approximately twenty years later, soon after her death, Ramana broke his silence, in response to a heartfelt question from one of his devotees and thereafter he would speak when necessary, but always from a place of deep and unwavering inner peace.

His quiet presence and steady gaze had the most profound and moving influence on those who met him and so it was that an ever increasing number of people were gradually drawn into this community. They were looking for someone who embodied the living truth, to guide them back to peace and freedom and that is precisely what they found.

Fortunately, there are others who experience Ramana's perspective, partaking of the shining Presence that comes from right understanding and it is my pleasure to be able to share their insights with you.

The nature of Self.

Ramana explores three levels of consciousness

After his deep and abiding awakening to the nature of the Self, Ramana asserted that there is a single, immanent reality, directly experienced by everyone, which is simultaneously the source, the substance and the real nature of everything that exists. He taught that the real Self is always present and always experienced, but one is only consciously aware of it, as it really is, when the self-limiting tendencies of the mind have ceased.

The Self is the ever-present, felt-perception; prior to and beyond concepts, which Ramana helps us to better understand - or at least get a mental grip on - via the following path of logic: There are the three levels of relative consciousness, namely waking, dreaming and deep sleep. In saying, 'I had a dream, I was in deep sleep, I am awake', you must admit that *you* were there in all three states. The same person sleeps dreams and wakes up, is it not so?

There is continuity in the sleeping and waking states, which is only the state of pure *being*. There is also a difference in the states, namely that the body, world and objects appear in the waking state, but disappear in sleep. There is no awareness of the body or the world in deep sleep, but 'you' must exist in your sleep, in order to say now that you were not aware in your sleep. Who says so now?

It is the wakeful person, for the sleeper cannot say it.

That is to say that the individual that is now identifying the Self with the body says that such awareness did not exist in sleep.

Because you identify yourself with the body you see the world around you and say that the waking state is filled with beautiful and interesting things. The sleep state appears dull because you are not there as an individual and therefore those objects were not present either. But what is the fact?

There is continuity of *being* in all three states, but not continuity of the individual and the objects. That which is discontinuous is transitory. That which is continuous is enduring and permanent. Therefore the state of being is permanent and the body and the world are not. They are fleeting phenomena passing on the screen of being-consciousness, which is eternal and stationary.

If you remain as you are now, then you are in the wakeful state. This becomes hidden in the dream state and the dream state disappears when you are in deep sleep. You were there then, you are there now and *you* are there, at all times.

The three states come and go, but you are always there. It is like a cinema, the screen is always there, despite the pictures that come and go on its surface. Nothing sticks to the screen, it remains a screen.

Similarly, you remain your own Self in all the three states.

If you know that, then the three states will not trouble you, just as the pictures that appear on the screen do not stick to it.

On the screen you sometimes see a huge ocean with endless waves, which disappear. Another time you could see fire spreading across the screen, which also disappears, without burning it. The screen remains unaffected, no matter what the picture.

In the same way, the things that happen during the wakeful, dreaming and sleep states do not affect you at all; you remain your own Self, no matter what. The Real will always exist. That which *is*, will persist forever, whereas that which appears anew will be lost.

Compare deep sleep and waking, the body appears in one state, but not in the other. Therefore the body will be lost, but the consciousness is pre-existent and will survive the body.

The three states of waking, dream and sleep cannot be real, they simply come and go. The 'I' of existence, which alone persists in all the three states, is real. The three are not real, only the one. It is not possible to say that they have such and such a degree of reality.

We may roughly put it like this; existence is consciousness, which is awareness, which is the only enduring reality. Consciousness plus waking, we call waking. Consciousness plus sleep, we call sleep. Consciousness plus dream we call dream. Consciousness is the screen on which all of the pictures come and go. The screen is real and the pictures are mere shadows on it.

Due to a long habit, we have been regarding these three states as real and hence the reference to the state of pure awareness as a fourth state. In truth there are not four states, but only one. There is no difference between the dream and the waking state except that the dream is shorter and the waking longer. Both are the result of the mind.

The man in deep sleep is not aware, whilst awake he appears to be aware, but it is the same person. There is no fundamental change to the essence of the one who slept and the one who is now awake. In deep sleep there was no awareness of the body and hence no body consciousness.

In the wakeful state there is awareness of the body and hence body-consciousness, therefore the difference lies in the emergence of body-consciousness and not in any change of the real consciousness. The body and body-consciousness arise and sink together. There are no limitations in deep sleep, whereas there are limitations in the waking state, these limitations are the 'bondage' that we experience.

In the waking state you identify with a body. The feeling: 'The body is I', is the error. This false sense of I must go. The real I is always there, it is here and now. It never disappears, or appears anew. There is no one who does not say 'I am', the wrong belief is, 'I am the body', which is the cause of all the mischief. This wrong knowledge must go. That is realisation.

It is not the acquisition of anything new, or a new faculty, it is only removal of all camouflage. The ultimate truth is so simple, it is nothing more than being in the already-existing pristine state.

Is one any nearer to pure consciousness in deep sleep than in the waking state? The question might as well be: 'Am I nearer to myself in my sleep than in my waking state?' The sleep, dream and waking states are mere phenomena appearing on the Self, which is itself stationary. *The Self is a state of simple awareness*; can anyone remain away from the Self at any moment?

The Self is pure consciousness.

No one can ever be away from the Self. This would be possible only if there truly was duality, but there is no duality in the state of pure consciousness.

The sleep state is nearer to pure consciousness than the waking state in one sense only, when passing from sleep to waking the 'I' -thought, with its belief in the individual self, must start and the mind must come into play. Then thoughts arise and the functions of the body come into operation. All these together make us say that we are awake.

The absence of all this evolution is the characteristic of sleep, but one should not therefore desire to be always in sleep. In the first place it is impossible, for it will necessarily alternate with the other states. Secondly, sleep cannot be the state of bliss in which the Self-realised being exists, for his or her state is permanent and not alternating. Moreover, the sleep state is not recognised to be one of awareness, but the sage is always aware.

Thus the sleep state differs from the state in which the sage is established; still more, the sleep state is free from thoughts and their impression on the individual. It cannot be altered by one's will because effort is impossible in that condition. Although nearer to pure consciousness, sleep is not fit for efforts to realise the Self.

You know you exist always, whereas the body does not always exist. For example, in deep sleep, or dreaming, it is revealed that you exist, even without a body.

In the waking state we identify the I with a body; we regard the self as having a body and as having limits and hence all our trouble. All that we have to do is to give up identifying the Self with the body, with forms and limitations. Then we shall know ourselves as the Self that we always are.

Limitation is only in the mind. Did you feel it in deep sleep? You exist in sleep and cannot deny your existence then. The same Self is here and now in the wakeful state. You are now, whilst awake, saying that life has limitations. What has happened is that there are differences between the two states, which are due to the mind. There was no mind in sleep, whereas it is now active. Your true Self also exists in the absence of mind.

Become independent and solve the riddle for yourself, are you in the world, or is the world in you? When you've searched deeply enough you'll find that there is no alternative but to accept the world as unreal, a temporary and fluctuating dream, imposed on awareness itself.

Is there anything wrong with the sense of reality that you have whilst you are dreaming? You may be dreaming of something quite impossible, relative to the waking state; for example of having a happy chat with a dead person. For a moment you may have some doubt in the dream, saying to yourself, 'Was he not dead?', but somehow the mind reconciles itself to the dream vision and the person is as good as alive for the purpose of the dream. In other words, a dream does not permit you to doubt its reality.

It is the same in the waking state, for you are unable to doubt the reality of the world that you see whilst you are awake. How can the mind, which has itself created the world, accept it as unreal?

The world is not perceived in your sleep, although you cannot deny your existence then. The world appears when you wake up, so where is it? Clearly the world is your thought.

Thoughts are your projections.

First the 'I' is created and then the world. The world is created by the 'I', which in turn rises up from the Self.

The riddle of the creation of the world is thus solved if you solve the creation of the 'I'. Thus it is said: 'Find yourself'.

Does the world come and ask you, 'Why do I exist and how was I created?' No, it is you who asks the questions. The questioner must establish the relationship between the world and himself. He must eventually admit that the world is his own imagination. Who imagines it? Find the 'I' and then the Self.

The significance of the comparison made between the world of the waking state and the dream world is this, both are creations of the mind and so long as the mind is engrossed in either it finds itself unable to deny their reality. The mind cannot deny the reality of the dream world whilst dreaming, or of the waking world whilst awake.

The states of sleep, dream and wakefulness come and go. The Self is not bothered, it has only one state. All talk of inconsistencies in the dream world arises only now, when you are awake; but whilst you were dreaming the dream was a perfectly integrated whole. That is to say, if you felt thirsty in a dream the illusory drinking of illusory water may have quenched your illusory thirst. But all of this is real and not illusory to you, so long as you do not know that the dream itself is illusory.

Similarly with the waking world, the sensations that you now have get co-ordinated to give you the impression that the world is real. If, on the contrary, the world is a self-existent reality, for that is what is evidently meant by its objectivity, then what prevents the world from revealing itself to you in sleep?

To say that you existed whilst asleep was it not necessary to call in the evidence of others, so as to prove it to you? Why do you seek their evidence now? Those others can tell you of having seen the world during your sleep, only when you yourself are awake. With regard to your own existence it is different. On waking you say you had a sound sleep and so, to that extent you are aware of yourself in the deepest sleep, whereas you had not the slightest notion of the world's existence then.

Even now, whilst you are awake, is it the world that says, 'I am real', or is it you? The world, which you say is real, is mocking you for seeking to prove its reality whilst of your own reality you are ignorant. You want, somehow or other, to maintain that the world is real, but what is the standard of reality?

That alone is real which exists by itself, which reveals itself of its own accord and which is eternal and unchanging.

Does the world exist by itself and was it ever seen without the aid of the mind? In sleep there is neither mind, nor world, when awake there is the mind and the world. What does this invariable concomitance mean?

Are you familiar with the principles of inductive logic, which are considered the basis of scientific investigation?

Of yourself you can say, 'I exist', that is, your existence is not mere existence, it is existence of which you are conscious.

Really, it is existence that is identical with consciousness.

Consciousness is always Self-conscious, if you are conscious of anything, it is of yourself.

What is the nature of the world? It is perpetual change, a continuous and interminable flux. A dependent, unself-conscious, ever changing world cannot be real.

Just as in a dream, a false knowledge, knower and known rise up; just so, in the waking state, the same process operates. In deep sleep, knower, knowledge and known are absent.

In the same way, at the time of experiencing the real 'I' they will not exist. On knowing this I, you know everything and nothing remains to be known.

Did you ask, whilst asleep, questions regarding your birth and wonder where you go after death? Why think of all these questions in the waking state? Let what is born think of its birth, the results and the remedy for that.

If, on the other hand, you withdraw your mind completely from the world and turn it within, to abide Here, that is if you keep awake always to the Self, which is the substratum of all experiences, then you will find that the world of which you are now aware is just as unreal as the world of your dreams. Self is the underlying reality, which supports the appearance of the other three, temporary states. This does not mean that there are four states; there is in fact only one, real, transcendental state.

A Self-realised being has dreams, but he knows them to be dreams, in the same way as he knows the waking state to be a dream. We could call them dream number one and dream number two. The Self-realised being is established in the fourth state, the Supreme reality.

He, or she, detachedly witnesses the other three states as pictures superimposed on it. The state of 'wakeful sleep', which we are calling the fourth state, is in fact the only real state and the other three are illusory.

Because the waking state is long we imagine that it is our real state. As a matter of fact, our real state is the fourth state, which is the only abiding state and which is always as it is. It knows nothing of the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. It is not a state, but the real and natural being of the Self. It is the transcendent state.

Consider a light that is kept above the stage of a theatre. When a drama is being played the light is there, which illuminates, without any distinction, all the actors, whether they be kings, servants, or dancers and then also all of the audience. That light will be there before the drama begins, during the performance and also after the performance is over. Similarly, the light within, which is the Self, gives light to the ego, the intellect, the memory and the mind, without itself being subject to the processes of growth and decay. During deep sleep there is no feeling of the ego; the Self then remains without attributes and continues to shine of itself. Even the idea of the Self being the witness is only in the mind, it is not the absolute truth of the Self. Witnessing is relative to objects witnessed.

For the Self-realised Being there is no distinction between the three states of mind. How can there be, when the mind itself is dissolved and lost in the light of consciousness?

Then all three states are equally unreal.

But the deluded are unable to comprehend this, because for them the standard of reality is the waking state, whereas for the Self-realised being the standard of reality is reality itself.

This reality of pure consciousness is eternal by nature and therefore subsists equally during what is called waking, dreaming and sleep. To him who is one with that reality, there is neither the mind, nor its three states and therefore neither introversion, nor extroversion.

His is the ever-waking state, because he is awake to the eternal Self. His is the ever dreaming state, because to him the world is no better than a repeatedly presented dream phenomenon. His is the ever-sleeping state because he is at all times without the 'I am the body' concept.

Because you are accustomed to identify yourself with the body and sight with the eyes, you say that you do not see anything of your permanent state. What is there to be seen?

Who is to see? How to see?

There is only one consciousness, which, manifesting as 'I' thought, identifies itself with the body, projects itself through the eyes and sees the objects around it.

When the ego, which identifies the form of the body as 'I', has perished, then the One who has dropped the ego will know him / herself to be the formless existence-consciousness.

The individual is limited in the waking state and expects to see something different in the 'fourth state'. The evidence of his senses will be the seal of authority, but he will not admit that the seer, the seen and the seeing are all manifestations of the same consciousness, namely 'I, I, I...'

Contemplation helps one to overcome the illusion that the Self must be visual. In truth there is nothing visual.

How do you feel your 'I' now? Do you hold a mirror before you to know your own being? Your awareness is the 'I', realise it and know the truth. The perception of 'I' is associated with a form, perhaps the body. Actually there should be nothing associated with the pure Self, because it is the unassociated, pure reality, in whose light the body and the ego shine.

On stilling all thoughts the pure consciousness remains.

Just on waking from sleep and before becoming aware of the world there is that pure 'I'. *Hold on to it without sleeping and without allowing thoughts to possess you.* If that is held firm then it does not matter even if the world is seen. The seer remains unaffected by the phenomena.

What is the ego? Enquire. The body is insentient and cannot say 'I'. The Self is pure consciousness and non-dual, it also cannot say 'I'. No one says 'I' in sleep. So what is this ego? It is something intermediate between the inert body and the Self. It has no location and if sought for, vanishes like a ghost.

At night someone could imagine a ghost at their side because of the play of shadows, but if they look more closely they will discover that the ghost is merely a tree or a post.

If one doesn't look closely then the ghost may continue to terrify you. All that is required is to look closely and the ghost vanishes. In fact it was never there.

So also with the ego, it is an intangible link between the body and pure consciousness. It is not real. So long as one does not look closely at it, it continues to give trouble, but when one looks at it, it is found not to exist.

The Self is a silent, thought-free state of undisturbed peace and total stillness. The one who has realised the Self knows that he is the Self and nothing; neither his body nor anything else exists, but the Self. To such a one, what difference could the presence or absence of a body make?

It is false to speak of realisation. What is there to realise?

The real is as it is, always. In 'realising' we are not creating anything new, or achieving something that we did not have before.

The illustration given in books is this; we dig a well and thereby create a huge pit. We have not created the space in the pit, but simply removed the earth that was filling the space there.

The space was there then and is also there now.

Similarly, we have to simply throw out all of the age-long, innate mental tendencies that are inside us. When all of them have been given up, the Self will shine alone.

Both the witness and his object are mental creations. There is only one state, that of consciousness, or awareness, or existence. God realisation is not knowledge to be acquired, so that in acquiring it one may obtain happiness. It is one's ignorant outlook that one should give up; the Self you seek to know is truly yourself.

Permanent and continuous Self awareness is known as Self-realisation. It is also known as Being-Consciousness-Bliss.

The Self is pure being, a subjective awareness of 'I am', completely devoid of the feeling, 'I am this', or 'I am that'. There are no subjects or objects in the Self; there is only an awareness of being.

Reality must be always real; it is not with forms and names, that which underlies these is the Reality. It underlies limitations, itself being limitless. It is not bound; it underlies reality, itself being real. Reality is that which is. It is as it is. It transcends speech and is beyond the expressions 'existence, non-existence', etc.

You are awareness itself. Awareness is another name for you. Since you are awareness there is no need to attain or cultivate it, all that you need to do is to give up being aware of other things, which are of the not-Self. If one gives up being aware of the not-Self then pure awareness alone remains and that is the Self.

Each one wants to know the Self. What kind of help does one require to know oneself? People want to see the Self as something new, but it is eternal and remains the same all along. They desire to see it as a blazing light and so on, but how can it be either light or darkness? It is only as it is. It cannot be defined, although the best definition would be: 'I am That I am.'

The state of Self-realisation, as we call it, is not attaining something new, or reaching some goal that is far away, but simply being that which you always are and always have been. All that is needed is that you give up your realisation of the not-true as true. All of us are regarding as real that which is not real. We have only to give up this practice on our part and realise the Self as *our* Self. In other words, *be* the Self. At some stage you will laugh at yourself for trying to discover the Self that is so self-evident. The seer who is seeing all of this now ceases to exist and the Self alone remains. How does one know this by direct experience?

If we talk of knowing the Self, then there must be two selves; one a knowing self, another the self that is known and the process of knowing; but the state we call realisation is simply being oneself, not knowing anything or becoming anything.

To call Self, which is the space of consciousness, the 'possessor of the body', is wrong. The world does not exist without the body and the body never exists without the mind. The mind never exists without consciousness and consciousness never exists without the Reality.

For the wise one, who has known Self by divining within himself, there is nothing else to be known. Liberation is our very nature, we are That. The very fact that we wish for liberation shows that freedom from bondage is our real nature, it is not to be freshly acquired. All that is necessary is to get rid of the false notion that we are bound. When we achieve that there will be no desire, or thought of any sort. *So long as one desires liberation, one is in bondage.*

Your supposed ignorance causes you needless grief; there is no cause for you to be miserable and unhappy. You yourself impose limitations on your true nature of infinite being and then weep that you are but a finite creature. Then you take up this or that spiritual practice to transcend the non-existent limitations. But if your spiritual practice, itself, assumes the existence of the limitations then how can it help you to transcend them?

Know that you are really the infinite, pure being, the Self. You are always that Self and nothing but That; therefore you can never really be ignorant of the Self. Your ignorance is merely an imaginary ignorance and true knowledge does not create a new being for you, but only removes your ignorant ignorance. Bliss is not added to your nature, it is revealed as your true, natural state, eternal and imperishable.

The only way to be rid of your grief is to know and be the Self. How can this be unattainable? People say that they are unable to know the Self, which is all pervading, yet even the smallest

child says 'I exist. I do this. This is mine.' So everyone understands that this thing 'I' is always existent and it is only when that 'I' is there that there is the feeling that you are the body. This is followed by the thoughts, 'He is John, she is Mary' and so on. To know that the one that is always visible is one's own Self, is it necessary to search with a candle?

There is no goal to be reached; there is nothing to be attained. You are the Self and you exist always.

Nothing more can be predicated of the Self than that it exists. Seeing God, or the Self, is only being the Self, which is yourself. You, being the Self and wanting to know how to attain the Self, is something like a man being at this place, but asking how many ways there are for him to reach this place and which is the best way to travel.

All that is required of you is to give up the thought that you are this body. Give up all thoughts of external things, the not-Self. The ego-Self appears and disappears and is transitory, whereas the real Self is permanent. Though you are actually the true Self you wrongly identify with the ego self, which does not exist.

Take care of yourself and let the world take care of itself. See your Self. If you are the body there is the gross world also. If you are spirit, then all is spirit alone. The worldly life requires the hypothesis of ignorance, which is only mental ignorance and nothing more. It is forgetfulness of the Self.

Can there be darkness before the sun? Similarly, can there be ignorance before the self-evident and self-luminous Self? If you know the Self there will be no darkness, no ignorance and no misery. It is the mind that feels the trouble and the misery. Darkness never comes or goes. See the sun and there is no darkness, likewise, see the Self and ignorance will be found not to exist.

How has the unreal come? Can the unreal spring from the real? See if it has sprung. There is no such thing as the unreal, because the Self alone exists.

When you try to trace the ego, which is the basis of the perception of the world and everything else, you find that the ego does not exist at all and neither does all of this creation that you see.

Scientific theories are created to explain the 'creation' of the world, but all the scientific and theological explanations do not harmonise. The diversities in such theories clearly show the uselessness of seeking such explanations, which are purely mental, or intellectual and nothing more. Still, they seem to be true according to the standpoint of the 'individual'.

There is no creation in the state of realisation. When one sees the world, one does not see oneself. When one sees the Self, the world is not seen, so see the Self and realise that there has been no creation.

Knowing the Self is being the Self and being means existence, one's own existence. No one denies one's existence any more than one denies one's eyes, although one cannot see them. The trouble lies with your desire to objectify the Self in the same way that you objectify your eyes when you place a mirror before them.

You have become so accustomed to objectivity that you have lost the knowledge of yourself. The Self cannot be objectified, for who is to know the Self? Can the insentient body know it? You constantly speak and think of your 'I', yet, when questioned, you deny knowledge of it. You are the Self, yet you ask how to know the Self. Because of this denial of the Self, people speak of illusion.

A realised being sees only the Self, just as a goldsmith, estimating the gold in various items of jewellery, sees only the gold. When you identify yourself with the body then only the forms and shapes are there, but when you transcend the body then 'others' disappear, along with your body-consciousness. Thoughts will cease to rise and the Self alone will remain.

It is like a cinema show. There is the light on the screen and the shadows flitting across it, which impress the audience as the enactment of some piece. If in the same play an audience is also shown on the screen as part of the performance, then the seer and the seen will both be on the screen. Apply it to yourself, you are the screen.

The Self has created the ego that has its accretions of thoughts, which are displayed as the world, the trees and the plants.

In reality, all these too, are nothing but the Self.

If you see the Self the same will be found to be all, everywhere and always. Nothing but the Self exists.

The thought 'I do not realise' is the hindrance.

Our real nature is liberation, but we are imagining that we are bound and making various strenuous attempts to become free, whilst we are all the time free. This will be understood only when we reach that stage; when we will be surprised that we were frantically trying to attain something that we have always been and still are.

An illustration will make this clear. A man goes to sleep in a room and dreams that he has gone on a world tour, is roaming over hill and dale, forest and country and reaches this room.

At that moment he wakes up and finds that he has not moved an inch, but was sleeping where he lay down. He has not returned after great effort to this room but is and always has been here. It is exactly like that.

If it is asked, 'Why being free do we imagine that we are bound?' I answer, 'Why, being in the room did you imagine that you were on a world adventure, crossing hill and dale, desert and sea?' It is all mind, or illusion.

The ignorant see only the mind, which is a mere reflection of the light of pure consciousness, arising from the Heart, but of the Heart itself they are ignorant. Why?

Because the mind is extroverted and has never sought its source.

The Self, alone, remains as it ever is. The three states owe their existence to non-enquiry and enquiry puts an end to them.

However much one may explain, the fact will not become clear, till one attains Self-realisation and wonders how one was blind to the self-evident and only existence for so long.

There is no real difference between the mind and the Self, because the mind turned inwards is the Self and the mind turned outwards is the ego and the entire world.

Cotton made into various clothes we call by various names, gold made into various ornaments we call by various names, but all the clothes are cotton and the ornaments are gold. The one is real, whereas the many are mere names and forms. The mind does not exist apart from the Self, it has no independent existence. The Self exists without the mind, but never the mind without the Self.

The Self is said to be a state of Being, a state of Consciousness and a state of Bliss. It is that which is; simple Being, called 'Self'. The lustre of Being is Consciousness and its nature is Bliss, these are not different from Being.

If a man thinks that his happiness is due to external causes and his possessions, it is reasonable to conclude this happiness must increase with the increase of possessions and diminish in proportion to their diminution. Therefore, if he is devoid of possessions his happiness should be nil. What is the real experience of mankind, does it conform to this view?

In deep sleep a man is devoid of possessions, including his own body. Instead of being unhappy he is quite happy. Everyone desires to sleep deeply. The conclusion is that happiness is inherent in man and is not due to external causes. One must realise the Self in order to open the store of unalloyed happiness.

Call it by any name, God, Self, the Heart, or the Seat of Consciousness, it is all the same. The point to be grasped is this: The Self means the very core of one's being, the centre without which there is nothing whatsoever.

The Self is the Heart and it is not physical, it is spiritual. It is that from which all thoughts arise, on which they subsist and where they are resolved. The thoughts are the content of the mind and they shape the universe.

When you are in the Heart, the Heart is known to be neither the centre nor the circumference. There is nothing else, apart from it. The Consciousness, which is the real existence and which does not go out to know those things that are other than Self, alone is the Heart.

The truth of Self is known only to that consciousness which is devoid of activity, abiding as its own Self.

There is neither past nor future, there is only the present. Yesterday and tomorrow don't exist, except when present. Experience takes place only in the present and beyond experience nothing exists.

Time and space are purely mental; birth and rebirth cannot be other than imagination for they take place in 'time and space'. Real rebirth is dying from the ego into the spirit.

Whenever identification with the body exists, a body is always available, whether this, or any other one, until the body-sense disappears by merging into the Source.

The stone that is projected upwards remains in constant motion until it returns to its source, the earth.

Although indestructible by nature, through false identification with its destructible instrument, the body, consciousness imbibes a false apprehension of destructibility. Because of this false identification it tries to perpetuate the body, which results in a succession of births.

But, however long these bodies may last; they eventually come to an end and yield to the Self, which alone eternally exists."

Who am I?

Being that which you already are.

Ramana's emphasis was on discovering the truth within oneself, which is why he strongly discouraged theoretical discussions and kept turning attention back to practical matters. A method, which he advocated to assist the process of Self-realisation, is the practice of Self-enquiry.

He recommended that the practice take place precisely where and as you are, because waking up to the truth does not need to take place in some remote forest, cave, church or temple.

Ramana spoke of three classes of spiritual aspirant and to each he gave an essential teaching:

The first group he compared with gunpowder – a single spark ignites them! For these beings a short exposure to the heat of truth causes transformational results and they realise the Self as soon as they are told about their real nature.

The next group he compared with charcoal, saying that a longer application of "heat" is necessary.

The third group he compared with wet coal, saying that prolonged heating may be necessary, depending on the dampness of the coal.

To the first group his message was mainly via the silent spiritual presence emanating from his Being, bringing silence of mind and the peace that passes understanding. When spoken, his message to them was, "You are already and always that which you ultimately seek, so just be as you are! Go to your Heart and be your Self."

At this level of teaching there is no question of effort or practice. All that is required is an understanding that the Self is not a goal to be attained, but rather the awareness that prevails when all the limiting ideas about the not-Self have been discarded.

In the words of Ramana, “The Self alone exists and it can be directly and consciously experienced merely by ceasing to pay attention to the wrong ideas we have about ourselves.

An imaginary accretion of wrong notions and misperceptions effectively veil the true experience of the real Self. The principal misperception is the idea that the Self is limited to the body and the mind. As soon as one ceases to imagine that one is an individual person, inhabiting a particular body, the whole superstructure of wrong ideas collapses and is replaced by a conscious and permanent awareness of the real Self.”

To the second group, Ramana spoke of a method for undoing the apparent bondage and falling into the heart of “Being-Consciousness-Bliss”, itself.

The method is as follows: *Place your attention on the inner feeling of “I”* and hold that feeling for as long as possible.

If you become aware that your attention has been distracted by other thoughts then revert to the awareness of the “I”-thought, or “I”-feeling.

One method for directing our attention to this I-feeling is to ask the question “Who am I?” which helps to turn our attention inward and focus it on our source.

In the early stages of practice, attention to the feeling “I” is a mental activity, which takes the form of a thought or a perception. As the practice develops the thought “I” gives way to a subjectively experienced feeling of “I”. When this feeling ceases to connect and identify with thoughts and objects it completely vanishes. The sense of individuality has temporarily ceased to operate. With practice this becomes easier to reach and maintain. Repeated experience of this state of being weakens and eventually destroys the mental tendencies which cause the “I”- thought to arise.

When their hold has been sufficiently weakened, the power of the Self destroys the residual tendencies so completely that the I-thought never rises again.

This is the final and irreversible state of Self-realisation.

As Ramana puts it, “Cling to yourself, which is to the ‘I’-thought. When your interest keeps you to that single idea then other thoughts will automatically get rejected and they will vanish. You fancy that there is no end when you go on rejecting every thought as it rises. This isn’t true, there is an end.

If you are vigilant and make a stern effort to reject every thought as it rises you will soon find that you are going deeper and deeper into your own inner self and come to a level where it is not necessary to make an effort to reject thoughts. Here it is impossible for you to be without effort, but at a deeper level it is impossible for you to make any effort.

When the mind has become introverted through enquiry into the source of the ‘I’-thought, then the mental tendencies will become extinct.

The light of the Self is reflected by the mental tendencies and produces the phenomenon called mind. Once the tendencies are extinguished the mind also disappears, being absorbed into the light of the one reality, the Heart.

This is the sum and substance of all that an aspirant needs to know. What is imperatively required of him, or her, is an earnest and one-pointed enquiry into the source of the ‘I’-feeling.

If thoughts arise to obscure your awareness of the ‘I’ within, then you should, without attempting to complete them, enquire, ‘To whom did they rise?’

What does it matter how many thoughts arise? At the very moment that each thought appears, if one vigilantly enquires, ‘To whom did this appear?’, or ‘To whom is this thought?’ it will be known, ‘To me.’

If one then enquires, ‘Who am I?’ the mind will turn back to its source and the thought that had arisen will also subside. By repeatedly practising thus, the power of the mind to abide in its source increases. The mind will eventually subside by means of the enquiry, ‘Who am I?’

The thought, 'Who am I?' destroying all other thoughts, will itself finally be destroyed, like the stick used for stirring the funeral pyre.

Tendencies towards sense-objects have been recurring down the ages and rise in countless numbers, like the waves of the ocean. They will also perish as meditation on one's nature becomes more and more intense.

Without giving room to even the doubting thought, 'Is it possible to destroy all these tendencies and to remain as Self alone?' one should persistently cling fast to self-attention.

As long as there are tendencies towards sense-objects in the mind, the enquiry, 'Who am I?' is necessary.

The mind and the ego are one and the same and are nothing other than the 'I'-thought. Other mental faculties, such as the intellect and the memory are nothing other than this; likewise the personality, the storehouse of mental tendencies and the ego, are names given to the one mind, itself. This is like different names being given to a man according to his different functions.

Arranging thoughts in the order of value, the 'I'-thought is the all-important thought because it forms the root and stem of all other thoughts; since each idea, or thought, arises only as 'someone's thought' and is not known to exist independently of the ego. The ego exhibits thought activity and the second and third person (you, he, she, it, that, etc.) do not appear except to the first person. Therefore they arise only after the first person appears and all three persons seem to rise and sink together. Trace, then the ultimate cause of 'I', or personality. From where does this 'I' arise? Seek for it within and it vanishes.

This is the pursuit of wisdom. When the mind unceasingly investigates its own nature, it transpires that there is no such thing as mind. This is the direct path for all.

The mind is merely thoughts and of all thoughts, the thought 'I' is the root. Therefore the mind is only the thought 'I'. The birth of the 'I'-thought is one's own birth and its death is the death of the person. After the 'I'-thought has arisen the wrong identity with the body arises. Get rid of the 'I'-thought, because as long as it exists there is grief and when it ceases suffering also ceases.

The ego's phenomenal existence is transcended when you dive into the source from where the 'I'-thought rises. Hold onto the root of this single 'I'-thought and other thoughts will disappear.

The ego is sometimes described as having three bodies, the gross, the subtle and the causal, but that is only for the purpose of analytical exposition. If the method of enquiry were to depend on the ego's form, you may take it that any enquiry would become altogether impossible, because the forms that the ego may assume are legion. Therefore, for the purpose of self-enquiry you have to proceed on the basis that the ego has only one form, namely that of the 'I'-thought.

Self-enquiry by following the clue of the 'I'-thought is like a dog tracing his master by his scent. The master may be at some distant, unknown place, but that does not stand in the way of the dog following him. The master's scent is an infallible clue for the animal and nothing else, such as his clothing, build or stature, etc, counts. The dog holds onto the scent whilst searching, without distraction and finally succeeds in tracing him.

Although the concept of 'I'-ness, or 'I am'-ness is by usage known as the 'I'-thought, it is not really a modification of the mind as other thoughts are, because unlike other thoughts, which have no essential interrelation, the 'I'-thought is essentially related to each and every other thought. Without the 'I'-thought there can be no other thoughts, but it can subsist by itself, without depending on any other thought, which makes it fundamentally different.

So then, the search for the 'I'-thought is not merely the search for the basis of one of the forms of the ego, but for the very source, itself, from which arises the 'I am'-ness.

In other words, the quest for and the realisation of the source of the ego in the form of the 'I'-thought necessarily implies the transcendence of the ego in every one of its possible forms. It is the one irreducible datum of your experience and seeking its source is the only practicable course you can adopt to realise the Self.

From the functional point of view, the ego has only one characteristic, it functions as the knot between the Self, which is pure consciousness and the physical body, which is inert and insentient. In your investigation into the source of the 'I'-thought you take the essential consciousness aspect of the ego and must distinguish between the 'I' principle, pure in itself and the 'I' thought. The latter, being merely a thought, sees subject and object, sleeps, wakes up, eats, thinks, dies and is reborn. But the pure 'I' is the pure Being; eternal existence, free from ignorance and thought-illusion.

If you stay as the 'I', your *being* alone, without thought, the 'I'-thought will disappear and the delusion will vanish forever. In the floodlight of the supreme Atman all objects disappear. When the mind is devoid of thoughts and turned inward it sees its own source and becomes that.

There is an absolute Self, from which a spark proceeds as from a fire. The spark is called ego and in the case of an ignorant person it identifies itself with an object, simultaneously with its rise. It cannot remain independent of such association with objects.

This association is the 'I am the body' idea, which is based on ignorance and its destruction is the object of our efforts.

The thought 'I am this body of flesh and blood' is the one thread on which are strung the various other thoughts that lead to thinking, forgetting and suffering in the cycle of birth and death.

If we turn inwards, enquiring 'Where is this I?' all thoughts, including the 'I'-thought will come to an end and Self-knowledge will spontaneously shine forth. This self-enquiry is the process and the goal, also. It is the most efficacious practice for true liberation from the cycle of birth and death. There are no other adequate means, whatsoever, to make the mind subside permanently. If made to subside by other means, such as breath control, mind control, muttering the names of God ('japa'), mantras etc. it will subside for awhile, but will rise again because all of these rely on the mind for carrying on the practice and without the mind they cannot continue. Self-enquiry is the one infallible means, the only direct one, to realise the unconditioned, absolute Being that you really are.

As and when thoughts arise, one should annihilate all of them through enquiry, then and there in their place of origin. Not attending to what is 'other' is non-attachment, or desirelessness. Just as a pearl-diver, tying a stone to his waist, dives into the sea and takes the pearl lying at the bottom, so everyone, diving deep within oneself, with non-attachment, can attain the pearl of the Self. If one resorts uninterruptedly, to remembrance of one's real nature until one attains Self, that alone will be sufficient.

Stillness, or peace, is realisation. There is no moment when the Self is not. So long as there is doubt, or the feeling of non-realisation, the attempt should be made to rid oneself of such thoughts. They are due to the identification of the Self with the not-Self. When the not-Self disappears the Self alone remains. To make room it is enough that objects be removed, room is not brought in from elsewhere. Not-Self is the false identification of the Self with the body and the mind. This false identification must go and then the Self alone remains. Therefore realisation is for everyone.

This very doubt, whether you can realise and the notion 'I have not realised', are themselves the obstacles. Be free from these obstacles also. There is no bondage, but only liberation."

To those in the third group referred to by Ramana, the so-called “wet-coal” contingent, he advised that if one is unable to still the mind and turn to the feeling of “I” within, then one should focus, instead, on the act of *breathing*.

Oxygen is nature’s purifier and tranquiliser. In ancient, traditional medical systems, such as Ayurveda, it is believed that the in-breath also allows an intake of pure energy known as “Prana”. The issue at stake, however, really lies well beyond the physical attributes of oxygen, or the benefits of Prana.

The deeper reason for becoming aware of the process of breathing is that it is a practical first step to stilling the mind and making possible further mental purification. Self-enquiry becomes easier as the mind sheds its habitual tendencies.

Here’s what Paul Brunton has to say on the subject of breathing, in his book, “The Secret Path”:

“There exists a profound connection between breath and thought. The movements of breath beat time, in a most remarkable fashion, with the movement of thought. Breathing seems quite a simple act and it may appear strange that it should have any effect upon mental action at all, but investigation and experiment indisputably prove the fact. Striking changes can be brought about in the body and the mind through the simple means of changing the breathing rhythm. It transforms an agonised heart into a heart at peace with the world. Breath may also be used to resist the diseases of the body, to endure the effects of extreme heat and cold and to change the tone of one’s thoughts. Consider, for a moment, that when you are excited your breath comes in quick gasps, but when you are plunged into deep thought it comes quietly and slowly. Watch someone who breathes in tumultuous jerks and you will see that their nerves are equally restless.

Breathing is normally an unconscious function of life; any attempt to change it will at once turn it into a conscious function and so the student who wishes to affect his/her mentality through the breath must set aside brief periods when he/she deliberately alters its rhythm.

Carefully observing the simple instructions that follow, on a regular basis, will have a marked effect upon your thoughts. The exercise consists in slowing down the rhythm of breathing to a point below the normal rate. The full reduction should not be made straightaway, but rather introduced gradually.

Begin by exhaling very slowly, hold awhile and then inhale gently, holding the breath momentarily, then breathe out again. Breathe through both nostrils. Practice this with full attention and eyes closed. It is important that you should pour all of your consciousness into your breathing until you seem to live in it, for the time being. Initially, practice this for no longer than ten minutes. As you become more experienced, advance it to as long as you like.

A slow, regular effort is called for; there should be no straining and no violent, deep breathing, as that would defeat the aim. *Complete muscular relaxation should reign.*

You may take it as a sign of success when the breath rhythm flows gently and effortlessly, so that if a feather were held before the nostrils it would hardly move.

Yet, if you feel the slightest discomfort of gasping for breath, at any moment, you should stop at once and realise that you are practicing wrongly. The effect upon you, of consciously dropping the rhythm of your breathing, will be a pleasant, relaxed mood, a calming of the constant vibration of thought, a pouring of oil upon the troubled sea of life and a more abstracted mental condition.

The intense concentration of your attention will cause you to forget other things in the act itself, so that you feel as if you have become a 'breath-being'. You should steep yourself utterly in the changed breathing process, blending your mind with it, submerging all other thoughts into watching it and in so doing you become temporarily transformed into a subtler, more sensitive person."

In the above description, Paul Brunton mentions the contrast between rapid breathing and still, even breathing. What I have noticed is that when this particular body gets tense, it virtually stops breathing, not from a place of peace or rest, but rather stuckness. Then the body's vitality gradually becomes depleted and the mood is pensive. Far from being peaceful, the mind is locked into some conceptual holding-pattern and thoughts prevail. Joy, tranquillity and bliss are then absent.

Once aware of this, I am able to let go of my hold and allow the gentle, yet deep, breathing process to resume. When there is a conscious awareness of the feeling "I", then calm, full breathing automatically arises and regulates itself.

What I find to be extremely useful, in focusing the mind and attaining one-pointedness, is what I call the "triple-anchor method": Firstly I become aware of the posture of the body. When locked in thought it will often be somewhat crooked, crumpled, or otherwise out of alignment. As per the Alexander Technique, I then mentally give myself the instructions, "Neck free, head forward and upward, back straight and wide, chest and belly soft and relaxed". As a further focus on posture, I then bring my hands together in front of my chest, in the classic prayer, or Namaste, posture and place attention on the flow of energy between them; simply aware of their connection. If in the company of others, I discreetly place my hands together on my lap, or connect the thumb and forefinger of each hand.

Next I check in on my breath and gently kick-start, or reconnect the breathing process; starting with an out breath and a significant hold, before gently breathing in and holding again, then repeating, in the ratio 9:9:6:6 (or 6:6:4:4) – using my heartbeat to count. Each breath following a wave-like motion, in which the belly leads and the chest follows.

Thereafter, or simultaneously, I go to the feeling of "I", within and use the method advocated by Ramana for dealing with any thoughts that arise; thereby returning attention to the Self.

I am

Nisargadatta shows the way.

Nisargadatta Maharaj was able to fully and permanently realise his inherent, Divine Nature, within just three years of hearing the truth from his teacher, Siddharameshwar.

The practice that he recommends is almost identical to that given by Ramana. Here's some of what he has to say about finding lasting peace:

“Just keep in mind the feeling ‘I am’. Refuse all thoughts except this one. The mind will rebel in the beginning, but with patience and perseverance it will yield and keep quiet. Once you are quiet things will begin to happen spontaneously and quite naturally. By repeated attempts you will stumble on the right balance of attention and your mind will be firmly established in the thought-feeling ‘I am’. Our belief about who we are is not inherent in the sense ‘I am’. Our usual attitude is of, ‘I am this’. Consistently and perseveringly separate the ‘I am’ from the ‘this’, or ‘that’. Try to feel what it means to *be*. Just to be, without being this or that.

The sense of ‘I am’ is always with you, only you have attached all kind of things to it, such as body, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, possessions, etc.

Because of them you take yourself to be what you are not.

Let go of your attachment to the unreal and the real will swiftly and smoothly step into its own.

When the mind stays in the ‘I am’, without moving, you enter a state that cannot be verbalised, but can be experienced.

To remain increasingly in that state you require the practice that comes from earnestness, sincerity and honesty.

When you are dead earnest you bend every incident, every second of your life to your purpose.

Your expectation of something unique and dramatic, of some wonderful explosion, is merely hindering and delaying your self-realisation. You are not going to get an explosion, for the explosion has already happened – at the moment when you were born, when you realised yourself as being, knowing and feeling.

There is only one mistake you are making; you take the inner for the outer and the outer for the inner. What is in you, you take to be outside and what is outside you take to be in you. The mind and feelings are external, but you take them to be in you, to be intimate. You believe the world to be objective, while it is entirely a projection of your psyche.

That is the basic confusion and no new explosion sets it right. You have to think yourself out of it, there is no other way.

Watch your thoughts as you watch the street traffic. People come and go and you register without response. It may not be easy in the beginning, but with some practice you will find that your mind can function on many levels at the same time and that you can be aware of them all.

It is only when you have a vested interest in any particular level that your attention gets caught in it and you black out on the other levels. Even then, work on the blacked out levels goes on, outside of the field of limited consciousness.

Do not struggle with your memories and thoughts, try only to include in your field of attention the other, more important questions, such as 'Who am I? How did I happen to be born? Whence this universe around me? What is real and what is momentary?'

No memory will persist if you lose interest in it; it is the emotional link that perpetuates the bondage. You are always seeking pleasure, avoiding pain, always after happiness and peace. Don't you see that it is your very search for happiness that makes you feel miserable? Try the other way, indifferent to pleasure and pain, neither asking nor refusing.

Give all your attention to the level on which 'I am' is timelessly present. Soon you will realise that peace and happiness are in your very nature and it is only in seeking them through some *particular* channel that disturbs. Avoid the disturbance, that is all. To seek there is no need; you would not seek what you already have. You yourself are God, the Supreme Reality.

To begin with, trust me, trust the teacher, for it enables you to take the first step. Then your trust becomes justified by your own experience. In every walk of life that initial trust is essential, without it little can be done. Every undertaking is an act of faith, even your daily bread is eaten on trust.

By remembering what I told you, you will achieve everything. I am telling you that you are the all-pervading, all transcending reality. Behave accordingly, think, feel and act in harmony with the whole and the actual experience of what I say will dawn upon you in no time. No effort is needed, just have faith and act on it.

Everybody is glad to be, but few know the fullness of it. You come to know by dwelling in your mind on 'I am', with the will of reaching the deepest meaning of these words. It doesn't mean to think repeatedly 'I am God', for that is to identify yourself with an idea.

If you mean by 'God', the unknown, then you merely say, 'I don't know myself'. If you know God as you know yourself, then you need not say it, best is the simple feeling, 'I am'. Dwell on it patiently, for patience is wisdom. Don't think of failure, there can be no failure in this undertaking.

Pay no attention to your thoughts, don't fight them, just do nothing about them. Let them be, whatever they are. Your very fighting gives them life. Just disregard and look through them. Remember that whatever happens, happens because *I am*.

All reminds you that you *are*. Take full advantage of the fact that to experience, you must *be*.

You need not stop thinking, just cease being interested.
It is disinterestedness that liberates; don't hold on, that is all.
The world is made of rings, the hooks are all yours.
Make straight your hooks and nothing can hold you.
Stop your routine of acquisitiveness, your habit of looking for results; the freedom of the universe is yours.
Be effortless.

Whatever is happening is bound to happen. There is a series of events, a scenario that is written and according to that scenario, things happen. If we have certain hopes and aspirations and things turn out accordingly, we are happy. If the things that happen are not according to our wishes then we are unhappy. We will continue to be happy and unhappy in an endless cycle, as long as we persist in this attitude.

However, the moment that we see things in proper perspective, that all we can do is to see that witnessing happens and that whatever happens is independent of our thoughts; then there is a different state.

There is no volition as far as an individual is concerned, things happen on their own. When that is seen there is already a certain peace of mind. There is nothing further to be done. Whatever anybody continues to do, or thinks he is doing, is purely a concept based on a certain image he has of himself. Once he acts according to that image he will be susceptible to all sorts of unhappiness.
Whatever happens is a mere movement in consciousness. Nothing remains to be done. There is nothing that you can do, or need to do.

Whether your concept of yourself is that of a big person, an important person, or a small person; whatever you decide, or think that you decide, is purely a concept.

The individual as an object thinks that he can decide, but in fact no object can decide. The body-mind complex is merely an object, a phenomenon and no phenomenon can act.

You will never grasp your true nature unless you change your centre of perception. If the centre of perception is a phenomenon, then whichever way you look, that looking is still from the centre of the phenomenon. Unless the centre of perceiving, itself, is changed to the Noumenon, you will never get an idea of your true nature.

It is a concept that 'I am this body' and equally a concept that whatever action takes place is done by this body and that whatever this body does is my doing.

It is in your own interest that I speak, because above all you love yourself; you want to make yourself secure and happy. Don't be ashamed of it and don't deny it, it is natural and good to love oneself. Only, you should know exactly what it is that you love. It is not the body that you love, it is Life itself. Perceiving, feeling, thinking doing, loving, striving, creating – it is that Life that you love, which is you and which is all.

Realise it in its totality, beyond all divisions and limitations and your desires will merge in it, for the greater contains the smaller.

Find yourself, for in finding yourself you find all.”

There is no seeker

Ramesh Balsekar reveals the truth.

Ramesh Balsekar rose from clerk to General Manager of the Bank of India. Outwardly he was guiding the bank through its most rapid growth period, but inwardly he was turning increasingly to the teachings of Ramana and Nisargadatta. Shortly after his mandatory retirement at age sixty he came to a whole-hearted understanding of the truth.

Here's a taste of what he has to say:

“All that is happening is a waking dream. In the personal dream everything is very real, just as the life of this waking dream seems to be very real. But once we are awake we are no longer bothered by that fact that our friend lay dying in the personal dream. We have then woken up from our personal dream into the ‘living dream’.

When there is enlightenment, or understanding, manifestation is seen as an appearance in Consciousness. You are then aware that even this is a dream. As a dreamed character you're not concerned with how long your character lasts. Whatever you are supposed to do, whatever role you are playing, is all part of the dream.

In this personal (sleeping) dream you find rivers and mountains thousands of years old. You find a baby being born and you find old people. They are all born at the instant that your dream begins, yet in the dream each has its own age.

After enlightenment what is seen is that this body-mind mechanism is a character in the dream and will continue as a character in the dream during its lifetime. But there is no personal concern about what happens to which organism. Once you accept yourself as a dream character, where is the individual, where is the doer?

For this dream play to take place Consciousness identifies itself with each individual, which has been conceived or created with certain given characteristics.

Only specific actions take place through that individual, be they regarded as good, bad or indifferent. New organisms are created so that the effects of earlier actions will take place.

Organisms are not created with some old souls continuing and new organisms are not created so that they can be punished or rewarded for past actions. *Whose past actions?*

What is any action but merely the actualisation of a thought that comes from outside. So whose action? Where does the thought come from? Why does that particular thought come?

The thought is supposed to produce a certain action through that particular body-mind organism; it has been conceived and created so that that kind of action takes place. It is so programmed! So who is ever guilty of what?

In this dream there are three stages of human development. The individual at first sees objects and believes himself to be an individual subject, seeing objects. He considers himself a separate being. Seeing other objects or events creates reactions in him.

In the second stage there is an understanding that all of this is actually a dream and unreal. The view changes and the person begins to see that no event really matters. He transcends the appearances, realising that they merely arise and pass against a background of steady consciousness. There is so much enjoyment of this understanding that the person often has difficulty in keeping it to him/herself.

They go about telling the world: 'All of this is unreal!'

They want to change the perception of 'others'.

The problems that this creates settle down only in the third phase, when the true perceiver is realised as that which created the appearance and that which simultaneously cognises the appearance. They are both the same.

The world is unreal in the sense that it depends on consciousness for its reality. It has no independent reality of its own. If every human, animal and plant suddenly became unconscious the world not only wouldn't appear, but it wouldn't exist. Just as your personal dream wouldn't make sense without characters to experience and perceive the dream events. The analogy of the shadow is often used to explain the concepts of real and unreal. The shadow is unreal in the sense that it cannot exist without the combination of sunlight and object. Nonetheless, even as a shadow it has some sort of temporary existence, so it is both unreal and real, at the same time.

Consider now the consciousness upon which all of manifestation depends for its existence. Consciousness is inherent in all manifestation, existing in and around all objects. It transcends the manifestation and yet is imminent in it. In truth manifestation is contained within Consciousness. Consciousness plays and directs all of the roles of its manifestation, every character.

The natural act is that in which the ego is not present. It is the spontaneously emanating effect of the right understanding itself. It contains no personal effort. This right understanding accepts all psychosomatic organisms as vehicles, or instruments, through which the totality of Nature functions. Each action, each event, becomes spontaneity, which is the essence of all natural action. It is the 'controlled accident' of being able to do precisely the right thing at the right time, at the right place, without any self conscious volition or purpose. The depth of such understanding comports the realisation that all events, though perhaps not very acceptable in the immediate context, are indeed part of the totality.

There truly is no individual who can be seen as the perpetrator of events and therefore there is no such thing as an enemy. The result of knowing this is that it becomes a habit to take life as it comes.

Events are witnessed as they occur, without reading into them any individual as the cause, or any pattern in the events that affect one individually. The focus of interest remains neither the past nor the future, but the present moment, the still point of the turning world and the centre of the rotation of seasons. It is necessary to realise that the true return to spontaneity neither demands any break in what is, nor any change.

Natural spontaneity essentially means the willing acceptance of *what is* in the present moment, without any desire to change it. It is only when this natural action is interrupted by the working of the split mind that the harmonious flow of the natural action is broken and conflict results. The split mind thinks in terms of the acceptable and the unacceptable as irreconcilable opposites, without really knowing what is acceptable and what is not.

What the split mind does is analogous to a dancer interrupting her dance with a simultaneous effort to understand and explain to herself the precise significance of each movement. Such an effort must necessarily be a disaster. What then is the individual supposed to do?

Very simply to remember that as an 'individual' he or she swims against the current and to realise that there truly is nothing for the illusory separate individual to do. *All that is needed is to float with the magnificent current of totality, in the ecstasy of oneness with the current.*

What does the dreamer do with his dream except passively witness it without judgement? What can a spectator do except to witness any spectacle over which he has no control? What can anyone do in a situation over which he has no control? Just let go!

When the understanding becomes an unshakeable conviction the letting go happens on its own, then there is no individual who is expected to let go. The mental image or illusion, of a separate individual, is itself the obstruction to the letting go.

Excessive verbal expression becomes a drag on genuine feelings. Verbal communication, the characteristic disease of the West, is seen in its naked form as the question, 'What is it?' being applied to every form of manifestation. There cannot be any description to explain what the natural world is.

The only way to keep separation away is to keep words and thoughts away from the feeling, so that what is natural may be felt with the silent mind. When thought is spent and conceptualisation is absent then the individual is no longer a separate entity, it gets merged in the silent consciousness as intrinsic essence. Such silent perception is the feeling that brings about the recovery of what was once the infant's inherent sense of integrity with the natural world.

Wordless contemplation can exist coincidentally with thinking when such thinking is witnessed without judgement and therefore without involvement. What happens then is the absence of a mind ceaselessly trying to split itself by simultaneously trying to act and judge, to think and reflect on such thinking.

There is an absence of 'mental mitosis', an absence of a vicious cycle of thoughts about thoughts about thoughts.

It is like not struggling in a whirlpool, which means, in effect, non-striving against a current, or floating at ease.

There is no individual comprehender and thus the arising of true understanding is not the result of effort on the part of a non-existent doer. It can only be a spontaneous arising, as the natural tendency of the identified Consciousness; that inner, inherent urge towards dis-identification.

It is from this viewpoint of the futility of volitional action that the Sage makes the stunning statement that happiness belongs to none but the master-idler, to whom even the natural action of opening and closing the eyes seems an affliction.

What he means to imply is that the continuous act of blinking, if regarded as a volitional act, would have been a real affliction. As with the act of blinking, the respiratory process, the digestive process and the workings of the incredibly complex nervous system are all involuntary functions in the human body-mind organism. They do not need any volitional action by the 'me' notion.

To the master idler all actions that take place through this body-mind are as involuntary as those processes, he does not consider himself the individual doer of any actions. Such a master idler merely witnesses, without comparing or judging, everything that happens. All actions that take place through the many body-mind organisms, including his own, are seen as being part of the functioning of Totality.

Ramana Maharshi, the great master idler, was once asked by a visitor why he, the Maharshi, did not do some social service, or at least go out and preach his own teaching, instead of merely laying about on his couch. Ramana calmly asked him, 'How do you know that all that is necessary is not already happening, just through my being here?'

You become a master idler when all sense of personal doership is lost. Give up action, give up doing, become the master idler and let action happen. This serene attitude is most likely to follow on from a deep understanding of the polarity of opposites and the basic non-duality in the universe.

It is not an attitude of pessimism or hopelessness, but rather one of serene acceptance of the fact that fortune and misfortune, sickness and health, come and go.

Constant change is life and life is change. The error lies not in nature, but in the attitude which demands that the course of nature halt at a particular moment of well-being.

The fact of the matter is that you are the everlasting, unchanging moment and merely witness the Lila (play) of changing relationships that we call life.

It is a matter of realising that the individual is very much a part of the manifestation of its process of functioning. There is no way that the 'individual' can get out of that process.

It is a matter of apperceiving that the universe is a multi-dimensional network of jewels, each one containing the reflections of all the others, ad infinitum. Each jewel represents a 'thing-event' and there is no obstruction between one thing-event and another.

Thing-events take place according to their allotted function and the supposed volition of the supposed individual is altogether irrelevant. The whole cosmos is implicit unity, although expressed in explicit duality. Therefore every point in the cosmos must necessarily be considered as its centre.

It is almost impossible to describe the sense of magnificence that comes out of the apperception of the nature of the individual in relation to the manifestation. The loss of individuality is exchanged for the gain of the totality of the cosmos.

What does the true comprehension of the polarity of the opposites ultimately mean? It means being aware of what actually is, without getting involved in an effort to judge it, measure it, or give it a specific name or label. It means being an intrinsic part of that reality, of 'What Is', instead of merely having a concept about it.

Often the objection is raised that it is impossible to suppress the flush of thoughts and ideas and the babble of words that arise almost simultaneously with the perceiving.

True, but is this not also part of the What-Is at that moment and therefore merely a part of the What-Is, to be aware of?

The point is not really to ignore or suppress the thoughts and ideas that arise, but merely to be aware of them as part of the What-Is.

What then happens is that instead of the horizontal proliferation of thoughts and words, followed by reactions of futility and frustration, followed by further mental dialogue; there can be calm awareness.

This witnessing of the What-Is cuts off such horizontal proliferation. Indeed, the arising of the horizontal involvement in thought and the vertical cutting off of such involvement, would, in the beginning happen at frequent intervals, but gradually the witnessing awareness, without judgement, would take over.

The intervals between 'involvements' would become longer and longer until, suddenly, there would be the realisation that awareness has become a steady phenomenon, like a continuous stream of oil being poured out."

You are no thing.

Randall Friend calls off the search.

Randall came from a “good Christian background”, but became increasingly disillusioned with what he had been taught. After a convoluted journey he arrived at the teachings of Nisargadatta Maharaj, Sailor Bob Adamson and Gilbert Shultz. The deeper his exploration went, the more he recognised that he, as a person, a separate entity, a “*me*”, bound and imprisoned in a body-mind, was a mere belief and didn’t actually exist!

In his own words: “The truth of what you are doesn’t need to be figured out, because you are already what you seek. We have to start from the fact that there’s nothing to find and nothing to gain, no attaining or achieving. Otherwise the mind is off on its path, off pursuing its goals. The great spiritual search is nothing but a path leading away from this moment, from now. Even if we hear that we are ‘That’, we gloss over it, sometimes subtly, sometimes overtly, in an attempt to *become*.”

If this spiritual quest is merely a passing interest then there is no compelling reason, really, to lay aside the concepts and beliefs through which we see the world. Filtered through concepts and beliefs, anything that is read or heard will be immediately analysed within that framework, using that foundation. But if there is a sincere and intense desire, or earnestness, to really know your true nature, the Oneness, true Self, or God, or whatever label you want to put on it, then an openness will arise. A helplessness in the face of hopelessness. An unlearning. A not-knowing.

We usually start with the idea of a ‘me’ that is suffering and needs to find liberation, yet this liberation is not something that we don’t already have, not something that we need to become. You are already free, now. This is where we must start; your true nature is already attained.

The 'someone' that you thought you were, was never there. That someone never, for one moment, existed.

It's a dream character, complete fiction. You are no *thing*.

There is nobody to get anything, but rather the need for a clear recognition of that which was already the case, already present, already and fully attained; which is to say that nothing at all is attained, rather it is the identification with a mistaken identity that confuses.

The unmistakable truth of enlightenment is that there is no one there, no one who gets it, no one who could become it, no one who could ever reach it, find it, stumble upon it, realise it or attain it. There is no one there to be bathed in the light of God. What you really are is beyond even an idea of enlightenment, so this isn't a story about someone gaining enlightenment or liberation, but rather a story about the realisation that there never was anyone to seek, or become enlightened.

Without the distraction of thought, without the distraction of a body, without the distractions of planets and stars and pieces of this and that, which came out of pure nothing, formed from emptiness; without these distractions we have an utter simplicity, an infinite potentiality of creation, of forms, of bodies and thoughts. An emptiness so full of potentiality that it burst into explosion with form, exploding an entire universe into being.

Whatever truth or reality was, it must have been there before the big bang, in fact the very essence of the boom, the very container and content of that original conception; of the world we see and know and take to be made up of several parts.

That very truth, or reality, must be here and now, must be the essence of what appears to be. That essence, that is-ness, that intelligence-energy or formless void of infinite fullness, must be the very essence of the body-mind that we have identified with. Yet, in identifying as a small, relative piece of this totality, of this infinite void of fullness; by identifying as a separate person,

we've overlooked our infinite and eternal presence, as the totality itself, as spaceless space and formless form.

We've created a little character and a world to play in. We couldn't have imagined a more believable story and for this we need the 'mind'. The mind is not always our friend because it is so full of stuff that we would sometimes prefer not to have. Thoughts come and they come and they come. They seem to be what we are, some sort of self-talk, me talking to myself. We think that we are those thoughts, even if we can't seem to control them. They sometimes lead to words that come out wrong, or embarrassing statements, or outbursts, at just the wrong moment.

In this mind we have memory; we can recall images of past experiences. The mind also has imagination and we can conjure up images of what the future might hold, creating a picture of what we'd like to happen, or what we fear might happen. This back and forth between memory, 'the past' and imagination, 'the future', is what we do most of the time. This pendulum of thought swings wildly, constantly and this seemingly uncontrollable roller-coaster of mind is taken to be our experience of our self.

Yet mind is nothing other than a conceptual container in which we place thoughts, memories, imagination and mental pictures, like songs that are heard on the radio and won't stop repeating. Mind is only a word that we have agreed to use to describe this process that is seemingly going on; yet that very word solidifies into a concept of something that exists, of something with independent or absolute existence, which stands out on its own, apart from the totality. The mind is thought of as some *thing*, some place in the brain, some container in which this little person, or soul, resides and speaks from, like a radio announcer's booth. Mind really means nothing, it's only a word. The actuality is the experience of thought, the experience of memory and the experience of imagination; images and displays that we know as our mental world.

It's quite obvious, for those who pause long enough to look, that we really have no idea of what we truly are, yet we're sure that it's 'my mind' and 'my body'.

No wonder we suffer. It seems to be a universal law that suffering happens. We don't like what is going on, we want things to be different. We experience the loss of things we had, of opportunities, or people, or health, or beauty. We want things and need things, we desire the things that will make life better and fear the loss of our possessions. Deeper than the material desires is the fear of death. Fear of losing, of not being good enough.

Identified as this body-mind, as this name and form, we are within this world; alien and separate, stuck with what we've been given, with the limited tools that we strongly try to bend to our will. We're determined to have a good life, have the things that we want for ourselves and our children, to rein in the forces of life to satisfy our demands, so that it's as we like it and need it. We're determined to become something better. Yet life never complies, it simply keeps going.

So, maybe after years of suffering, or just years of experiencing the impermanence of image fixes, we turn to spirituality. We turn to the idea of enlightenment, or realisation, or liberation, or oneness, or some other term, the meaning of which we don't really know. We read about this thing called enlightenment, how it is pure bliss, pure freedom, which will make our life better, make this a good picture, full of love and happiness, full of wisdom - a new 'me' that never has problems, with things being magically sorted out by our enlightened presence. I will know all, be all, be loved and be wanted. I will have the magic key to life and all my problems will be gone.

Enlightenment, it seems to us, is a way out, an escape, a hope that there is some better place, some better state of mind, some way to happiness; something that I can get, something I will become, something new and different; very different from my current, miserable life.

It is an escape from the mild boredom and excruciating pain and fear that I currently experience.

But this is not what the great sages have said. They have said that this enlightenment is not an attainment, not something that you don't already have, or something that you have to reach, or get. Rather, that it is something that you're overlooking, something already attained; something that is fully present now, but which is missed in preference for what might be. But we don't want to hear that, because we don't like *now*, whatever the hell it is!

It seems that in order to be delivered from this miserable life story, to be saved from it; we must really look at it. We must force our eyes upon the very tragedy and boredom and imperfection and insignificance which we feel actually describes our existence; our limited appearance in this vast and apathetic world. Instead of ignoring it and hoping it will go away, it seems we must really look at it, we must notice it. It seems that we must face the very thing that we want to be rid of... the story of 'me'.

There is a me that isn't happy with my life, there is a me that wants it to be different, wants to be happy, wants to end suffering. Yet, through all the efforts we never reach what we are seeking. We never get the enlightenment, so the great story has to end there. The search is doomed to fail, because enlightenment was never something that a person could attain or achieve. Even if this is clearly seen, then enlightenment is still never gained, because it is obvious that there is no one to *become* anything, including becoming enlightened.

We've heard this before, but it's just not convenient in our story of me; suffering and seeking, looking yet not finding, wanting desperately to know the truth and reality of what we are. We're looking to get out of this trap that we've created, this entanglement of uncertainty which we wade through and this murky idea about what we are.

But we've used our tools to capacity, applying our worldly knowledge as we've always done, exercising our belief system to its fullest. We have literally exhausted our capability to analyse these pointers, these spiritual messages, these paradoxical puzzles.

At some point we might be caught off guard, be shocked into silence, slam our head hard enough!

We might just pause the search and in that pause we might look, for the smallest fraction of a second, at what is going on. In our frustration, or exhaustion, we might be open to laying aside our shield of beliefs.

What, really, is this me that I've taken myself to be?

What is this person, this individual self, this tiny little speck in an enormous universe, wandering across a small planet, striving for things to make life better, unhappy at the things it doesn't like, having some moments of happiness, but generally moments of sadness, despair, isolation and loneliness?

What really is this small self, this bundle of memories and imagination? This contraction against a hostile world, this sensation of being at the centre of whatever the hell we're stuck in?

This me is an idea, a concept. 'Me' is a story woven from the string of experiences gone by and the potential for experiences to come. The me is an experience formed entirely out of concepts, out of beliefs based on inattention to what is really going on, a mistake of perception, a creation of duality where none exists.

'Me' is a story of one who was born, yet that birth is also a story. The name and form were seemingly born, if we can even say that, but any appearance is itself nothing other than a gathering of perception and sensations and a placing of a label. The person has no reality, no truth. The person is not there, never has been, never will be. Your true nature is not limited to abiding in a temporary and impermanent bag of skin.

It is the typical goal-oriented mind-set to put in effort and see results. Do this meditation, or that sadhana, repeat this mantra, or repeat that puja; all in the attempt at discovering bliss, or peace, or the wisdom promised by enlightenment. Yet we constantly overlook the root question, the very foundation of the search itself; who is doing the search? Who is doing the meditation, or mantra? Who wants this bliss, or peace? Who will be the recipient of enlightenment?

Peripheral questions may arise in the search; the when, the where and the how, yet this one, 'who?' is the very core question. Who does any of this apply to?

The primary direction of the questioning is inward: Who is this me? Who is suffering? Who is it that wants to end suffering? Who is it that needs bliss or peace? Who am I?

This question focuses the mind upon one point, continually brings the mind back to the one central reference point, which is the 'Me-I-take-myself-to-be'.

As the inevitable questions come up, 'How do I get this? What do I need to do? Where do I look?' the direction is not to entertain this endless chatter, but simply to ask who is asking the question. Who am I?

As the thoughts come up and are noticed, the question naturally becomes, 'Who will undergo these paths?'

In this way one can shine a constant spotlight upon the ever-present, but subtle, central reference point; that assumed self-centre, which we've taken for granted as existing, taken on as identification without any investigation or questioning.

It becomes very clear that most thoughts that come up, especially thoughts surrounding the spiritual search, are always referencing this me, this central reference point. Who am I?

The thoughts point to someone, yet when turned around, when directed inward to find out who is being referenced, no one is ever found. No one can be located as a solid, separately existing entity. No one is present to receive the title, 'me'.

No one sits huddled inside that head, wired into the brain, ready to push all the right buttons, in command of this body-mind organism. *No one* is found to be located behind the screen of self reference.

The only thing present is this seemingly solid bundle of thought, this cloud of concepts and words and this knot of contraction. This is quite obviously made up of beliefs and assumptions. Yet, as we gloss over the ramblings of the mind and the constant referencing to a non-existent entity called 'me', as we take for granted the very root, or primary necessity for any of this search to be valid, we find ourselves wading in a pond of mud and murky water, consisting of our own inattention.

Who am I? Who is it that has these thoughts? Who is it that is searching? Who is it that is the ultimate knower of all this? Who is it that is expected to find truth and reality?

A light of awareness is shining, looking outward and assuming the presence of a looker, assuming the presence of a limited self, who owns awareness, who is the projector of awareness. This light is illuminating all that appears, without effort.

The totality of present appearance comes all at once - the room, the walls, the space, the desk, the book, the body, the breath, the heartbeat and the thoughts; all these objects appear now. They arise within this ever-present light of awareness. Yet we consistently miss one vital point. *Who is looking?* This question turns the light of awareness around to shine upon the one who is seeing all these objects.

In this illumination, in this flooding of light, in the space where we're looking from, we find nothing at all. We find no looker, no owner of awareness, no seer. We find nothing but darkness, silence, stillness, vast impersonal space. We find no apparatus from which awareness is projected, from which awareness has its source. We find no mechanism performing the awareness, no limited space in which awareness functions. We find only silence, unidentified awareness, formless awareness, vast spacious and boundless awareness.

This boundlessness is almost a presence, a subtle feeling of existence, a simple feeling of *being*, a knowing presence which is very familiar, yet unidentified. This presence isn't something we can quantify; nothing we can measure.

This presence of knowing doesn't have characteristics or attributes, it has no colour, no shape, no size, no name and no form. This knowing presence is vaguely familiar, as if it has been there all the time, underneath the identifications of appearance, a screen upon which the small self comes and goes, jumps around in play, asserts itself and then subsides.

This presence of awareness doesn't seem limited by the mind; the mind actually seems to appear on, or in, this very presence. Thoughts pop up and dissolve in the silence that is this very presence and these thoughts are the very mechanism in which the small self appears; the method by which the small self, the *me*, asserts itself. These self-referencing thoughts are pointing to something which cannot be found. As the spotlight of awareness is directed within, these thoughts simply arise and point to something which is itself another thought, another belief, another assumption.

This assumption of who I am is what suffers.

It is very clear that this knowing presence never suffers.

This presence is the container in which the false, suffering entity appears, as only ever a *thought*.

Suffering is revealed to be another thought, another reference to this non-existent entity, another story about a fictional character. Suffering is a thought about a thought. Can a thought suffer? Can a thought be what you are? To whom is the thought arising? Who is the knower of the suffering thought?

Thought is seen to be another experience, conceptualised and labelled as thought. The words themselves are somehow referencing something which is also another experience. The 'I' that I take myself to be is very clearly only known to arise as a thought, another experience.

Who is it that is doing the experiencing?"

The implications of Self-realisation

Adyashanti's deconstruction.

Adyashanti, who started life as Stephen Gray, of Cupertino, California, set out on a fierce spiritual quest at the age of 19, practicing Zen meditation. Some fifteen years later he came to a realisation of his true nature, which he doesn't ascribe to the years of questing in that tradition, but rather some parallel act of Grace, in which his attachment to a separate entity dissolved.

He says that when we talk about seeking enlightenment, we are using the most abused phrase in the spiritual dictionary. What we really should be seeking is an answer to the question, "What is the truth?" He goes on to say: "Seeking enlightenment asks, 'How can I get that experience and sustain it?'" This is a construction project, whereas true enlightenment, or more accurately, Self-realisation, is a demolition project.

Most of what we call spirituality is a construction project, ideas are ascending, kundalini energy is rising and you are ascending. It just keeps building and people feel as if they are getting better and better. But true enlightenment shows you that everything you ever believed to be true isn't. Everything you take yourself to be, you aren't. Whoever you think others are, whether good, bad or indifferent, is simply not true.

Whatever you think about God is wrong. You cannot have a true thought about God, so all your thoughts about God tell you precisely what God isn't. Whatever you think about enlightenment is also precisely what it is not. Self-realisation is the removal of absolutely everything; otherwise it will not liberate you.

In the lives of most human beings everything is about an avoidance of the truth. The truth that we are avoiding is *emptiness*; we don't want to see that we are nothing and that there is no right viewpoint.

Instead of looking at the emptiness we insert a positive statement, such as, 'I am Consciousness', or 'All is love'. We don't not want to see that there is a gaping void at the centre of our existence.

It was said, long ago, that the truth sets you free and the most compassionate thing you can do for anyone is to speak the truth. It is not liberating to speak only what we want to hear, because that enslaves us to an endless cycle of chasing something that doesn't exist. The truth might make our minds feel helpless, but that is the point, that's what surrender means. It doesn't mean, 'I'm giving up my life, my heart, my everything, for the ultimate spiritual goody.' Most of the people doing their prostrations and incantations are doing it only for the ultimate spiritual goody. True surrender, on the other hand, seeks nothing in return. It doesn't pretend to be spiritual because it is going to get something from it. Be willing to give up everything that is not the truth, whether you like it or not, whether it shakes your foundation, or not, the Truth is not an acquisition, for you to keep. There has to be an absolute letting go, but not for something in return, rather the letting go of the one who is letting go. There is nothing in Self-realisation for the 'me'.

We might hear a thousand times that there is no separate self, but what happens when we take it inside and seriously consider what it means? We could find that everything that I, as a separate self, hold as true, isn't. The taste of no-separate-self is totally liberating. It does not mean that you have extended yourself infinitely everywhere and have merged with everything. That's a beautiful experience to have, but that's not what Oneness is. Oneness is not merging, for merging happens between two and any appearance or experience thereof is an illusion. Even when I think that I am merging with the Absolute, it is my fictitious self merging with another fiction.

Mystical experiences aren't enlightening, no matter how wonderful they are, they simply don't last. Oneness is when there is no other. There is only this, as it is.

As soon as you say what 'This' is you've defined what it isn't. This is only realised in the utter demolition of everything that is not. What is required is an awakening outside of everything that comes and goes, outside of time.

This awakening is just like waking up from a dream at night, which is as real as this moment. If you think your life is threatened in your sleeping dream you panic, just as much as you would in this waking dream. Authentic spiritual awakening is the same, in the experience of, 'My God, I took myself to be a human being named 'So and so', but I am not, despite there being a body, a mind and a sense of self!'

There are no enlightened individuals; there is only

Enlightenment, which is what wakes up; not you, or I.

You and I are rendered not only insignificant, but non-existent.

A body that has been robbed blind by enlightenment is happy to be so, because it has been robbed of the opinions of the mind and returned to the peace of Emptiness.

The most challenging thing for a spiritual seeker to do is to stop struggling. The human condition is characterised by a constant state of struggle, which manifests as conflict, fear and confusion. These various states of tension, caused by the compulsive and mechanical impulse to struggle, distort our ability to perceive what is true and liberating. The human condition contains within it an unconscious need to struggle.

Why?

Because, by remaining in a state of constant struggle we maintain the boundaries that create the sense of a separate self, a self who unconsciously defines itself as 'the one who struggles'.

More shocking is the discovery that not only do we need to struggle in order to remain separate, but we *want* to remain separate, even though it causes so much suffering, fear and confusion. We want to remain separate because by remaining separate we maintain the sense of being someone different, special and unique.

Most people are addicted to and identified with being the separate and unique victims of the tragic dramas of their lives. People so often form the deepest bonds with one another by sharing the painful and tragic episodes of their lives, as if those define who they really are; clinging to both negative and positive self-images, creating endless struggle between contradictory identities that have no fundamental reality to begin with.

The most insidious and unconscious way in which spiritual seekers struggle is by using techniques that are supposed to help them stop struggling. But who has the biggest investment in these practices? The sense of a separate self, or the ego, does.

Only the ego asks how to stop struggling because the question 'How?' leads to further struggle and the mechanism of struggle is how the ego keeps control.

Struggling only ceases when you passionately enquire into who and what you truly are - deeply enough to waken from the dream of being a personal separate self, a self which is ultimately nothing more than a defence mechanism against the revelation that no separate self exists!

As soon as you stop struggling you lose the boundaries that give you a sense of separated self. With nothing to oppose, the false sense of self evaporates in the Unknown and you can suddenly feel lost, with no familiar ground to stand upon. Your identity is cut loose from all that is known and you seem to be floating in a vast expanse with nothing to grab hold of.

This groundless expanse is the foretaste of liberation, but few choose to remain in this unknown territory. Instead, most people begin to struggle in opposition to the unfamiliar vastness, until they once again begin to feel secure in a familiar sense of self and separation.

Faced with a freedom that is absolute, which leaves no room for separation from the whole, most people will compulsively contract back into a position of struggle, where they can maintain a familiar sense of self.

This means, that when actually given the choice, most people will choose to struggle and remain separate, rather than face the 'austerity' of a freedom that shatters the sense of separateness.

It is only when you desire to be free more than you desire to remain separate that you spontaneously move into a freedom that is final and beyond struggle.

In that freedom there is nothing to hold onto and nowhere to hide, nothing for the personal ego to attain, or define itself by. This is not the liberation that most people envision when they start out. Consciously, or unconsciously, most people envision a freedom that they can attain and possess.

However, It is bigger than anything you can imagine; it would be more accurate to say that it 'possesses' you, which may be experienced as shocking, frightening or unbelievably liberating. It is a revelation that swallows up the dream of a separate you and reveals Self to be a limitless expanse, void of any sense of selfhood; timeless and uncaused, yet constantly birthing manifest existence into form.

To have a glimpse of this existence requires very little, but to live it requires the destruction of every concept you have ever held, or will ever hold. To rest in the Unknown literally means that your mind knows absolutely nothing about how to get to your goal.

It means that you have stopped looking at the mind to tell you how, when and where.

By absolutely ceasing to become, you stop.
This stopping is effortless and comes out of Wisdom.”

Perfect Brilliant Stillness

David Carse on waking up.

The official storyline for David's awakening, is that whilst he was trekking through the jungles of Ecuador he stayed over at some village and suddenly developed an intense and graphic fear, which culminated in a resignation toward the certainty of death.

To me, it sounds very much as though he was taking part in an Ayahuasca ceremony, or some similar Amazonian, shamanistic ritual; which was responsible for his rising dread, followed by a tremendous release and breakthrough into a state of deep understanding. In his case it would appear that this breakthrough was permanent and not temporary, as it usually is with "entheogenic enlightenment".

David describes it as a "State of surrender and acceptance which landed in my lap, without any accomplishment on my part and which resulted in total understanding. The individual self, the one I thought resided in that body, looking through those eyes, the one I thought I was a few hours ago, had woken up enough to perceive Presence. The individual is not there, does not exist, never has. There is nobody home.

A moment of disorientation as the dream is recognized as a dream and then waking to the Real. Immediately, the dream falls away and it is known that the dream was never real, that one never was what one had been dreaming about."

Turning his attention to the human condition, he goes on to say: "The human object has bitten off more than it can chew - taken on more than it is capable of. Armed with just enough of the consciousness flowing through it to give it enough intelligence to facilitate a function it calls thought, the human being believes his, or her, self, to be a separate, independent being, autonomous in itself, having the responsibility of freedom and of choice in its decision and actions.

But, it isn't so. The so-called human being is only an object in Consciousness, however much it believes itself to be an independent conscious being, however much it attempts (unwittingly) to usurp the role of Subject. How can an object in the play of Consciousness, with the entirely limited capacity of an object, a dream character, a character in a movie, not be completely overwhelmed if it attempts to take on the role and responsibilities of Subject; of the dreamer, of the scriptwriter, producer and director of the movie?

The human character convinces itself that it has almost complete freedom and therefore responsibility for its actions, but then finds itself nevertheless doing what it is intended to do in the perfect unfolding of the infinite expression of Consciousness. Playing its role as it has been scripted, often with commentary such as, 'But I didn't mean to do that! I'm trying to be a better person, but I still find myself acting that way. This didn't happen as I intended. I keep doing this, why can't I learn?'

So much energy is spent in berating oneself for not living up to what one has become convinced one should be doing.

So much guilt! An equal amount of energy is expended in trying to avoid that guilt by faulting someone else for not living up to the same expectations. It is ridiculous.

The human organism thinks that it is God and takes on the responsibilities of God, but has only the capacities of a created object. It's an impossible set-up. The suffering that the human object brings upon himself / herself by taking on the role of Subject is, in fact, imaginary and unnecessary. It's a massive case of confused and mistaken identity. The whole idea that there is such a thing as an individual, a self, a person, a human being, is simply a small, innocent mistake.

There seems to be all this activity, all these thoughts and emotions, what is called a 'stream of consciousness', which gives the illusion of a certain continuity of brain activity, which you think of as your 'self', but in fact it doesn't exist.

There is no 'thing' here. Who you think you are, a human being, is actually much less; a dream character, an apparent body-mind organism functioning as a pass-through mechanism in the expression of Consciousness. But who you really are is immeasurably more. All of this, including the life of the body-mind thing that you think you are, is in truth unfolding perfectly, flawlessly, in the pure choiceless Awareness that you truly are.

The idea of awakening to that truth is only an analogy and has a certain usefulness, but it also has its limitations. It is one of the straws grabbed at in an attempt to describe the indescribable. Any analogy breaks down eventually and this one does here, because in truth, the 'dreamer' is Consciousness, which is all that is. It has never been asleep and has no need to awaken. In particular, this analogy makes a demarcation, a distinction where there isn't any, which is the false separation between those perceived individuals who have awakened and those who haven't. This is artificial, a construct of mind.

There is only Consciousness, streaming through and expressing itself as all these body-mind things. What happens in one body-mind thing, as distinct from another is insignificant unless you believe that they exist as individual persons and identify as one of them. There is no difference in the one who has awakened and the one who has not.

There is just the mysterious tacit understanding and no more.

You take it personally and set up 'us and them', but these personal reference points are illusory, purely mythical. There is understanding, but no one to have understanding, or anything else, for that matter.

How does one go from perceiving with split mind to the understanding of whole mind? The point is that one doesn't. No one ever understands, there is only understanding. Appearances notwithstanding, there are no discreet individuals or entities of any kind, anywhere.

This seeking, this quest for understanding, ultimately leads to the annihilation of the seeker; to the realisation that there never was a seeker to begin with, that the entire world perceived by split-mind, including the perceiver, is an elaborate illusion. There is nothing to acquire, but only an error to be exposed, because acquiring necessarily involves using and strengthening that spurious 'I' whose dissolution we require. For this, merely a readjustment is needed, which is the abandonment of identification with a non-existent individual self, which leaves us un-blindfolded and awake to our eternal nature.

To seek to persuade ourselves that we don't exist as personal entities is to ask the 'I' to believe that what it is looking at is not there. It is not we, alone, who have no existence as entities, there are not any anywhere in the reality of the cosmos, never have been and never could be. Only the whole mind can reveal this knowledge as direct cognition, which once realised is obvious. This is the total readjustment and only 'I' remains.

The entire world perceived by split mind, including the perceiver, is an elaborate illusion. Self-improvement, spiritual practice, seeking, attempts to walk the path, to follow the way; are all attempts to dig ourselves out of a hole that we create by the very efforts we make. It's like quicksand. The struggle is instinctive and we think it helps, but actually it is itself the problem. The struggling, the seeking is the sense of the individual self trying to keep telling its story. There is nothing to seek, because *separation* is itself the illusion and there is no *thing* to be separate from another. No Thing. There is only one and not two, all else is not.

That not-two that is, is what is 'I', here. This this-ness, this I-ness, which I is, is *all* that is. There is no 'there', there is only *here*. There is no path to follow, because all paths lead from here to there and thus lead away from what is, from the only place there is to be, from Home.

There is no path that leads from here to there, which is why no practice, or study, or devotion, or learning, or work or anything you could do on a path, would ever get you there.

You are already *Here*.

The idea that there are separate individual selves is only possible because in each apparent self there is an experience of Self. This experience has been misconstrued to be a personal experience that belongs to a personal body-mind.

The Life-force, the Self animating one body and mind is deemed different from that animating another, because the expression of that Self is different in each. We concentrate on the inconsistent, variable expression and miss the constant that lies beneath, which is that there is only one. There is only one Self, one Awareness. My knowing I am is the same self knowing, as your knowing I am. Reality is that which underlies appearances... the Self, the I Am, Awareness, the Absolute.

What we call individuals are only apparent, relative constructs. In fact, all of what is called physical and mental reality is only appearance and relativity, which is why, truly, there is nothing happening here, despite what it seems.

Despite appearances, nothing in manifest reality is real.

Nothing is happening and the story of your life, along with everything else, is a thought bubble, which ultimately doesn't exist.

There is no answer to the question 'why?' Everything arises spontaneously in Awareness. The constant asking of the question, 'why', is simply the mind's attempt to grasp control. In the end the mind settles for non-answers and maintains its illusion of control, rather than recognise that there are no answers and admit that it has no control.

The tendency, without being aware of it, when one hears about this, is to intellectually make Consciousness, or Presence that other, that we used to call God, or Spirit, it's just a change of name.

Ultimately there is no other, because there is no individual. There is no Thou, because there is no I. There is no spirit, because there is nothing which is not spirit. The split of duality is not, there is only one and I am not other than this one.

The thought comes, 'There is nothing to think about.' Then there is stillness, there is awareness, Consciousness streaming through and expressing itself as all of these body-mind things.

Humans seem possessed by the idea that there is something that we can do to get what we want and we have been convinced that there is something we have to do, or should be doing. There is nothing you need to do. Nothing to balance, or adjust, or heal, nothing you need to make better, or improve, nothing to purify, or sanctify or consecrate. Nothing to reach, nothing to accomplish, nothing to prove, nothing to construct or deconstruct. Nothing to work at, or learn, nothing and no-one to teach, not even anything to understand or get, nothing to become...

Of course, if it is in the dream, of All That Is, for a body-mind object to appear to do any of these things, then it will happen; something for the dream characters to do whilst the dream lasts.

Students of the teaching often struggle to reconcile the idea of free will with that of determination, or destiny. The idea that you are already all that is and that there is nothing you can do to attain it; with admonitions to earnestness in self-enquiry, questioning and investigation.

But there is no conflict, because the teaching of 'always already' does not mean that you must stop all efforts, because that stopping, in itself, would be an effort. If you are to understand the teaching then you, as an ego, as an identified self, will be motivated to perform what is necessary for that understanding to occur. If meditating, or studying, or working were to happen, they would happen.

That, itself, is part of the always-already, in which events are not important in themselves, but they will happen if they are to happen. The complete understanding is not likely to happen whilst you sit on your butt, avoiding the elements of the teaching, refusing to face your misconceptions and thinking only of everything else.

What appears as motivation, deliberation, earnestness and determination, choice and action; is simply the operating of the mechanism by which the whole of manifestation unfolds. The misperception is to take it personally, as *your* motivation, *your* deliberation, *your* choice and action. It is completely impersonal. Simply the totality unfolding as it is, being what you always, already are.

There is only watching the body-mind, which you are not, have thoughts occur to it, be motivated and perform actions, or not. There is only complete simplicity, an openness, a consent to letting happen what will happen and to letting the misconceptions fall away. There is no such thing as an entity.

Now you know you are awake because you are here and you have knowledge. There is nothing else, other than this knowledge.

Any question which may arise here is answered immediately and they all have the same answer and that is, 'That question, that thought, like all thoughts, is empty.'

When there is the misconception, the idea that there is a separate entity here, out of whose individual mind the thought or question arises, then the question is taken as important. When all is seen as it is; all thoughts, feelings and actions are seen to arise as the infinite expression of Consciousness.

Whatever arises can only be the perfect unfolding in consciousness, however it appears to the apparent individual.

These body-mind things are only instruments, objects in consciousness and therefore cannot know the basis, the purpose, the reason by which Consciousness works.

When any question is asked in this context, the question simply dissolves. All simply is as it is. The one who understands that life is but a dream is himself a dream character and part of the illusion. The mind that thinks that life is a dream doesn't have an existence apart from the dream and this thought arises within and as part of the dream.

You are taking the dream that you are projecting as real, as something outside and apart from yourself.

Stop, go back and don't waste your time doing anything other than being silent, being still, within. Anything which is your apparent self is illusion, not true, does not matter and it is this that you project outward onto the blank screen, without.

Anything which is out there is illusion, not true, does not matter.

Let yourself be emptied of these. Let there be Emptiness.

Let yourself be ripped open, hollowed out, gutted. Be aware that whatever form this will take is not up to you and it may take time. Let yourself be brought to a place where this does not matter.

In stillness find yourself asking the dangerous question that the ego doesn't want you to think about, the question that will end your life. Let yourself be brought to a place where it is no longer necessary to find someone to blame, either yourself or another, where that need for specialness no longer destroys you.

Where it is no longer necessary, or possible to turn away from your Self and look outside yourself, to see what is.

Looking outside continues the dream. Only looking within, relentlessly, deep within, past and prior to the superfluous levels of intellect and reason, feelings and emotion, psyche and subconscious, to what you are; only this can lead to the awakening. This has nothing to do with either, 'without; or 'within'. Wake up!"

Remain as Awareness

Rupert Spira on the real meaning of meditation.

From an early age Rupert was deeply interested in the nature of Reality. For twenty years he studied the teachings of Ouspensky, Krishnamurti, Rumi, Shankaracharya, Ramana Maharshi, Nisargadatta and Robert Adams, until he met his teacher, Francis Lucille, over a decade ago.

Francis introduced Rupert to the teaching of Jean Klein, Parmenides, Wei Wu Wei and Atmananda Krishna Menon, to help him understand the true nature of experience.

Rupert has now written three books on the subject of Non-duality and here are some choice excerpts from his teachings: “From the viewpoint of the earth, the sun comes and goes, whereas it is, in fact, always present. Likewise, from the viewpoint of the body and mind, our essential nature of pure Awareness comes and goes, but, in its own experience of itself, it is ever-present.

All experience is illuminated, or made knowable, by the light of pure Knowing. This Knowing pervades all thoughts, feelings, sensations and perceptions, irrespective of their particular characteristics. We are this transparent, unchanging Knowing.

Our Self, which is luminous, open, empty Awareness, cannot be enlightened. It is already the light that illuminates all experience. Nor can a separate self be enlightened, for when the separate self faces the light of Awareness, it vanishes, just as a shadow does when exposed to the sun.

To invest one’s identity and security in something that appears, moves, changes and disappears is the cause of unhappiness. The separate self is not an entity, it is an activity; the activity of thinking and feeling that our essential nature of pure Awareness shares the limits and the destiny of the body and mind.

Just as a screen is intimately one with all images and, at the same time, free of them, so our true nature of luminous, empty Knowing is one with all experiences and yet, at the same time, inherently free of them.

We are the open, empty, allowing presence of Awareness, in which the objects of the body, mind and world appear and disappear; with which they are known and ultimately, out of which they are made. Just notice that and be that, knowingly. When everything that can be let go of is let go of, what remains is what we desire above all else.

In ignorance, I am something, in understanding, I am nothing; in love, I am everything. Our self-luminous, empty Awareness knows no resistance and is, therefore, peace itself. It seeks nothing and is thus happiness itself. It is intimately one with all appearances and is, as such, pure love.

We normally consider ourselves to be a collection of thoughts, feelings and sensations. I, the separate self, living inside the body-mind and made of the body-mind and meditation is normally considered to be an activity that I, this body-mind, undertakes in order to achieve some kind of goal, whatever that goal might be; enlightenment, stillness, peace or liberation.

In other words, from that point of view, the separate self is believed to be what we are and meditation is considered to be an activity that we do. However, in the true approach, meditation is understood differently, it is understood to be what we essentially *are* and the 'separate self' is understood to be an activity that thought does from time to time.

I'm not suggesting that conventional types of meditation don't have their uses, of course they do, but it is not what is understood here as meditation. Meditation, as it is understood in this approach, is not any kind of activity, but rather meditation is what we are, not what we do.

Meditation has nothing to do with an activity, or cessation of activity of the mind; focusing, watching, training or stilling it, or watching the breath. It is simply to *be*, simply to be the presence of Awareness, simply to be that which is aware.

We are aware, right now, of our experience, aware of these words, and aware of our thoughts and feelings, whatever they might be. We are aware of whatever sights or sounds are present in our room, including the tingling sensations of the body. We are effortlessly aware of all this flow of experience and we don't need to make the slightest effort to be that which knows, or is aware of our experience.

Meditation is simply to be knowingly this one, the one that is aware of our experience. This one is sometimes called 'Awareness'. The suffix '-ness' means 'the presence of', so the word 'Awareness' simply means 'the presence of that which is aware'.

So, be sure that when this word 'Awareness' is used, it doesn't refer to some extraordinary, abstract idea about something that we don't know or are not familiar with. It is simply referring to what we essentially, naturally are; to that which knows or is aware of our experience, to whatever it is that is knowing our thoughts; knowing these words and knowing whatever sounds and sights are present right now.

Whatever it is that is known or experienced in any moment, is known by 'you'. You are that which is aware of your experience. That one is called 'I', 'Awareness', 'knowing Presence'.

Meditation is just to be knowingly that.

All seven billion of us are that, but not all of us realise it, which is why we say it is to be *knowingly* that. Most of us are unknowingly that; we don't realise that we essentially are the Awareness with which our experience is known.

We have overlooked this simple aware Presence that is our essential Self and imagined ourselves instead to be a cluster of thoughts and feelings.

In this approach, we simply notice that we already and always are whatever it is that knows, or is aware of, our experience. It would be impossible to be anything other than that. Just try to be something other than that which is aware of our experience. Try not to be that. It's impossible.

So meditation is the easiest thing in the world; it's even easier than breathing. Even breathing requires a very slight contraction of some muscles. To be and to know oneself as this aware Presence is even easier than that. Absolutely nothing is required of the mind to be knowingly this Presence, which doesn't mean that the mind should be rejected; it can be left exactly as it is.

Some minds may be relatively quiet; others may be commentating on what is being said here, or thinking about other matters. All kinds of thoughts may be going on. It doesn't matter whatever is going on in our mind. Give the mind total freedom to go wherever it wants, whenever it wants and to think about whatever it wants.

Meditation has nothing to do with what is, or what is not taking place in the mind. Give the mind total freedom to do whatever it has been conditioned to do. There is nobody personally responsible for the activity of the mind. In fact, the entire universe conspires to make every event take place.

That is, every thought, every feeling, every action, every wind that flutters, every butterfly that moves, everything in the entire universe, is involved in the slightest thought or feeling. So the universe is responsible for our thoughts.

If we're going to take on our thoughts, we will have to take on the entire universe. Leave thoughts alone. Be effortlessly and knowingly that which is aware of your thoughts. Notice that we are that and simply be that knowingly. Know yourself as that and don't restrict Awareness to thoughts; include feelings.

There may be no feelings present or there may be feelings of sadness, shame, guilt, fear, inadequacy, lack, etc.

Let whatever feelings are present simply be as they are.

Likewise, be sure that bodily sensations are included. Let the tingling, amorphous cluster of sensations called 'the body' be exactly as it is. If the body is uncomfortable, allow it to move.

Meditation has nothing to do with sitting in a fixed posture without moving, bearing the pain in our knees or back, hoping that we're going to gain something by doing so.

Be natural with the body; if it's uncomfortable allow it to move.

Be sure that the world is also included and by 'the world', we mean sights, sounds, tastes, textures and smells. These are all we know of a world. Let everything be included.

We don't have to try to include everything - that would be an activity of the mind. Just see that 'I', Awareness, am already wide-open in all directions to whatever is appearing.

Just be knowingly this wide-open knowing, or aware Presence.

See that this Presence is not involved with any particular appearance. *It just allows every appearance to be as it is, without getting involved in it, just as the screen allows every image in a movie to be as it is, without getting involved in it.*

We don't have to make anything *happen*; just notice that it is already the case. 'I', that which is aware of my experience, am intimately one with all experience and at the same time completely uninvolved with it.

We don't have to work for decades trying to become detached. I, this knowing, or aware Presence, am already detached from all appearances and at the same time, am intimately one with them; just as the screen is not attached to the image but, at the same time, is intimately one with it.

So this has nothing to do with standing in the background as an aloof witness and holding the mind, body and world at a distance.

Whatever it is that is aware of our experience is intimately one with it, pervading all experience and, at the same time, free of it. The screen pervades the image, is one with the image, and yet, at the same time, is independent of it.

It is not stained, harmed, hurt, altered, changed, moved or destroyed by the image.

Likewise, I, this empty, aware Presence, pervade all experience, but am never harmed by it, never stained by it, never hurt by it.

We don't have to defend ourselves against any experience. We would only defend ourselves against a particular experience if we thought that it could harm us.

I'm not referring to physical harm to the body; it's natural to look after the body. I am speaking of psychological suffering.

Don't follow me with your thoughts, follow me in your experience; check what is being said in your actual experience. See clearly that what we essentially are, that which is aware of our experience, is intimately one with it, and, at the same time, free of it.

It is not possible to find this presence of Awareness, or to know it as an object. To begin with, we may try to find or know it in the same way that we would find or know a thought, feeling, sensation or perception. But it cannot be found as any kind of object; the only way to know it is to be it.

Awareness knows itself simply by being itself, which is why our Self, Awareness, is sometimes said to be 'nothing'; not a thing, not an object, not a thought, feeling, sensation or perception. It is sometimes said to be empty, transparent or void.

Such words are meant to evoke the experiential realisation that what we essentially are cannot be found, felt, known, seen or experienced as any kind of object, however subtle; not even the subtlest feeling of being.

At the same time, when experience appears, that is, when thinking, sensing or perceiving appear, it is utterly pervaded by the knowing of it. All there is to a thought is the experience of thinking and all there is to thinking is the knowing of it.

That Knowing is this transparent, empty Awareness that is our Self, this no-thing. This empty, aware 'no-thing' takes the shape of the experience of thinking, just like the empty screen takes the shape of the fullness of the image.

The fullness of the image is made of the emptiness of the screen. The fullness of experience: thinking, sensing and perceiving - is made of the emptiness of pure Knowing, pure Awareness.

We are this 'empty', knowing Presence.

All there is to a thought, sensation or perception is the knowing of it, the experiencing of it, and that is what we are.

So this empty 'nothing' turns out to be the fullness of everything. We are not simply an empty nothing, an empty 'no-thing-ness'.

We are that, but that is the substance, the reality, the stuff out of which all experience is made. As such, we are everything. Wherever we look, we find only our Self. If we look around at the outside world, all we find is the experience of seeing and the only substance present in the experience of seeing is the knowing of it. That pure Knowing is our Self.

It is only abstract thought that separates out a seer 'in here', from the body and the seen, 'out there', in the so-called world. With that thought alone, the inside self and the outside world come into apparent existence.

But experience is not composed of these two essential ingredients, a subject, 'me', on the inside, and an object, called the 'world' or 'other', on the outside. These are just an abstraction that thought superimposes onto the reality and intimacy of all experience.

Experience itself is much more intimate than that. It is not composed of two parts, 'dvaita', but is rather 'a-dvaita', not two. Locate yourself nowhere; find yourself everywhere.

The separate self - the imaginary separate self - is made of a thought, which imagines that I, Awareness, the light of pure Knowing, am located in and limited to this little body-mind. With that belief, alone, a separate self comes into apparent existence and it is on behalf of this imaginary self that most of us lead our lives; thinking, feeling, acting and relating on behalf of a self that doesn't exist.

The experience of unhappiness is the signal that comes from the intelligence of the body-mind to indicate that we have made a mistake, that we have mistaken ourselves for a cluster of thoughts and feelings located in and as a body-mind.

Suffering is to the mind what pain is to the body, a signal that something needs attending to; suffering is not here to thwart us, it is not a punishment, on the contrary, it is here to help us. It is a wake-up call.

To begin with, it is a gentle call, but in time it gets more and more severe. However, irrespective of its intensity, the wake-up call is always saying the same thing; we have mistaken our self for a cluster of thoughts and feelings, we have overlooked or forgotten who we truly are.

The separate self is not what we are; it is an activity of thinking and feeling. Meditation is not what we do, it is what we are; simply to be knowingly this open, empty, aware Presence and to find this Presence at the heart of all experience.

Intimately one with it and yet, at the same time, unharmable, indestructible and utterly free."

The Master of Self-Realisation

Sri Sadguru Siddharameshwar Maharaj

Sri Samartha Siddharameshwar Maharaj is one of the greatest unknown saints of the twentieth century. He was born in the month of August 1888 A.D. in a small village called Pathri in the district of Sholapur, India. On the sixth day after his birth, his grandmother had a dream in which the great Saint Siddheshwar appeared before her and told her that the boy is his incarnation and asked her to name him Siddheshwar, prophesying that he will become a Saint. At the age of 16 he began work as an accountant and he then met his Master, Sri Bhausahab who was teaching people to attain Final Reality via a method that was known as Pipilika Marg, or the "Ant's Way", of Hindu Mythology; a slow, but steady, process based on the repetition of mantras and use of meditation.

It occurred to Siddharameshwar that by hearing and practicing the teachings of the Master and thinking it over, one could attain Final Reality more quickly, through the correct use of thought; an approach that became known as the Bird's Way.

He preached in a very simple and lucid style, giving examples from daily life. Based upon the records of his disciples, to include Ranjit Maharaj and in particular, Nisargadatta Maharaj, two superb books came into being, namely: "Master of Self Realisation" and "Amrut Laya" (The Stateless State), from which I would like to share some excerpts that illustrate his style of teaching and make available his key concepts:

"One needs to be always at the door of God, which means to be always concentrating on the Self, within, the awareness that 'I am'. The attention on the 'I am', the sense of our existence, is the door of the guru and hence the door of God. Our awareness, our attention, is the path by which we enter into the temple of God. We have to enter the inner recesses by this door. By constant Self-awareness, you go to the state where the Guru exists.

It is said that there are nine types of devotion and the seventh is to rebuild old dilapidated temples and repair water tanks. By this is meant that we should help each other to restore the health of our bodies and minds, broken by shock and adversity; cleaning out the dirt that comes from wrong thinking, as well as the weeds and moss in these tanks. Once we have removed the dirt, then we can check that the walls are still strong and we can refill them with clean water, which can be shared with our community.

In order to transform an ordinary man into a realized man it is not necessary to physically renounce the world, only a change of mental attitude is necessary. One should have the attitude, 'Let the objects come and go, it is all the same to me'. Day and night the conviction 'I am Brahman', should be sustained, until there is no more concern about the body. One who censures oneself, does not censure another. One who does not get puffed up with pride by prosperity, does not become miserable by poverty. If a man has this attitude he becomes God, but all those who ask for material satisfaction are of the beggar caste.

Your mind is engrossed in the objects created by illusion, to include the body. The whole struggle in illusion is because you want the body to get only what the mind considers to be 'good' and because you devote your mind to this struggle, the world exists. Because there is objective knowledge 'you' exist. How can the Lord pervade the body in which 'you' (the ego) have taken residence? How can one sheath contain two swords? How can God occupy that place where the 'I' is?

At night, in deep sleep, objective knowledge fades away, the ego disappears and only the quiescent Self remains. Whether one is a king or a beggar, all are equally happy during sleep. One who survives as 'I' has all the troubles of thinking about various gods, penances, money, heaven and hell, which means that all of these miseries affect the mind. When the mind is erased, only the Absolute Reality remains.

Do not talk about objects of the world, whether an atom or Brahman, because even if the mind enjoys worldly pleasures for millions of years, it will never be satiated.

However, because the mind is created by saying something (the arising of concepts), when you stop saying it, the mind vanishes. Ego is only made up of the mind, intellect and the sense of 'I' and 'you'.

All talk, except about one's own Self, is false. Many aspirants talk of nothing other than the objective world. What is important is that the 'I' should be destroyed. The Jiva (individual) enjoys eating the fruit of the tree of life, in the form of worldly existence; but Shiva, the bird that is sitting at the top of the tree, does not care for it, even if he is sitting on the fruit. When the fruit is renounced, he becomes the Reality, but when he looks towards objects he becomes a man. To remain in the world with the clear understanding that 'all of this is false', is an act of great courage. Live as you like, but internally be unattached.

Objects are untrue; you must turn your mind's attention away from them and cultivate the attitude that the Self is Brahman. Because you think that you have to do a lot of things, you become miserable, but as we (realized ones) have to do nothing, what is there to worry about? This is why we are always happy.

One who has a duty to perform, whether he is a king or a god, is a labourer. One who is desireless is the God of all gods. When the mind is turned towards the Self, the Absolute Reality is obtained. The Self is bound only by the concept of being an individual, but if the individual consciousness, with the aid of its own determination, realizes that it is not the body, but the Self, then it stands liberated.

One should come to despise desires and give up all pride associated with desires in order to help one break free from bondage. One who has given up the pride of the body is ever free and attains the bliss of the Self, being purged of all worries.

In order to abandon the ego, discard all passionate attachments and surrender everything at the feet of the Master. Once this is achieved one comes to know that everything is but a mirage and that the Self alone exists, knowing that you are not related to anyone and belong to no one. He alone is a valiant warrior who kills the ego and continues to live in this world; he has freed himself from the clutches of 'I' and 'mine'.

The loss of this life as a human being is similar to the loss of a precious gem, because the human species is the species of Knowledge. Make use of it; do not waste it worrying over petty things like earning your bread and butter, or thoughts about worldly matters. Knowledge of the Self is an utmost necessity without which a human being is as good as an animal, because then one comes and goes and it is in vain that this life is spent. One who wants to see that he is a human being and not an animal should *think*. Try to find out who you are, from where you have come, as well as where you are destined to go and why. It does not matter if all other work is left unattended.

Why do we feed a horse? It is because we can mount it and reach a desired destination. Similarly we feed our body so that we can use it to reach the goal of Self-realisation. To mount this horse means to take the path of Knowledge. The Lord has created sorrows in order to make mankind wise enough to turn to the path of Self-knowledge.

Wake up! Knowledge alone can come to your rescue and relieve you from the miseries of this worldly life. All that you gather, hoard and stack away will one day vanish.

It is knowledge, alone, that makes one's existence fruitful.

If you put in sincere efforts now you are sure to win everlasting bliss, but the secret is perseverance. Signs of misfortune become evident with laziness. Shake off laziness, only then will you gain contentment.

Search within and outside and with the help of Knowledge realize that 'I' am the only one present, in one and all.

That one and only Knowledge has all the eyes, hands, feet, etc. of all the individual creatures of the animal world. This universal body has thousands of faces. Desires are all untrue and they all serve the single purpose of protecting the body, but they do not give you a sense of fulfillment. They are there for your merriment and because of great fondness for them they have acquired great importance, but desire is not the true tool for acquiring happiness.

As long as domestic life runs smoothly and desires are fulfilled, no one is interested in the Ultimate Truth. People, obsessed with their desires, feel that their domestic life, alone, is all-important and remain preoccupied with the fulfillment of their basic needs. This obsession has brought about their downfall, because they neither possess Self-knowledge, nor are they inclined towards renunciation. They are neither pure, nor know how to behave properly. When you depend on something, sorrow is born. One who loves this illusion and who does not behave in a selfless manner is afflicted by sorrows. One who aspires after happiness should remain uninterested in desires. Ultimate Truth is obtained only when you renounce the body that is made up of the five elements, which are alien to the Reality.

The self of a wicked person is the same as that of a realized person, there is no difference. Notions such as, 'I am a sinner' and 'I am a pious person performing religious duties', are only the ideas of one who is ignorant. There is no difference in their True Nature, just as there is no difference between the gold in the hands of an untouchable and that in the hands of a Brahmin, the True Nature of all is the same.

Though everything works by the virtue of the single source, there is variety in manifestation. As is your concept, so will you see. It is God who has conceived this world. Concept is itself the mind, 'God' is your own incarnation. Birth and death are the innate qualities of the body. As the Self brings down the qualities of the body on itself, it is obliged to endure the

consequences, which are inseparably linked with the qualities of the body. Because the Self identifies with the mind it is hounded by joys and sorrows that really only affect the body. The awakened ones know that they are not the body and do not identify with it; thus after the demise of the body they merge into the True Form of the Self.

Birth and death, joy and sorrow, thirst and hunger are the six primary urges of the human condition. The yogis consider it a great fortune when detachment permeates the mind, for then one is devoid of the six urges, it is known that God resides in the body and one is free from birth and death. The concept of sins and merits was introduced to set fools on the right path. Once one has taken to treading the right path these concepts are meaningless. You are the Supreme Self, everything else is mere sentiment. If you remain 'asleep' and give up all distinguishing properties you are not bound by time or space.

Keep saying 'I am He' and attain that state, this is all that matters. Progress is achieved by consistent work, do not be disheartened but keep trying. Why should you not work towards your own welfare? As is your faith, so is your fruit. Do not ascribe the fruit to destiny. The one who makes a sincere effort will surely be rewarded. Worship God with hands that are pure and enjoy good fortune. Fools who are undisciplined and non-worshippers will suffer from a lack of good fortune.

Check to see if you possess some bad quality and be rid of it. Do not laze around and waste time. Beautify yourself from within and find ways to make yourself wise. You can never say when death will pounce on the body, therefore stick to the right path. Do not waste a single minute without worship of the Divine, within. So far, if you have wasted your life, let it be, the past cannot be undone. If you prefer to remain ignorant then you remain in the cycle of 8.4 million births and suffer the sorrows of the lesser species. Remember that there is no other God, but you.

The Inner-Self alone is God. Knowing this, worship Him with the feeling of Oneness. This is the path of non-duality. Worship with the feeling, 'I myself am not different from God'. In other words, become one with God, be united with Him. Worship is the process of being one with the Lord. Be aware of the fact that you are the Self and then worship. When you say 'I am in the form of Knowledge', it is a sign of being conscious. Later give up that Consciousness and be quiet and peaceful. This itself is service. Then your ignorance will vanish and true bliss will be attained. As you are eternal, nobody can wipe you out. You are the Self which is conscious of all; all else is illusion, which merely appears and disappears.

Saying 'I' is ego and saying 'mine' is attachment. Both I and mine do not exist at all; they are generated only when you think of them. Both 'you' and 'I' are united; we do not have separate entities. After gaining Self Knowledge do not give up your daily practices. Now that you recognize the Lord, who lives within you, take refuge in Him. You do not need anything. Best if you just keep quiet, for that is the greatest worship you can offer.

We are not the body made up of five elements; we are the omniscient Self, the Witness, the doer and experience of all. You cannot hold onto the Self, because it is you who would be holding yourself. You are united, uninterruptedly and incessantly.

In this world you have set out on a mission to look for yourself. The entire human race has come into the world to seek the Self. Taking birth in various species, you have been looking for yourself since time immemorial, without realizing that the destination is so very close. It is Parabrahma, that which is beyond Brahma, who controls the mind, the intellect and the thinking etc. Who can control Him? As soon as He is revealed all religions and duties are laid to rest. He is endless, eternal and imperishable. He and only He, exists everywhere. Wherever you look, He is there. He faces all directions and yet does not have a face. No one is conscious of Him, but He is conscious of all.

The entire world appearance is delusion, give it up. Go about it step by step. First get over the feelings 'This is my house, this is my city', etc. Do not identify with the role of spouse, or parent, otherwise you continue to exist as an individual. Do not repeat what you have done so far.

Remember that you get what you imagine, so if you think you are an individual you turn into an individual and if you exist as God then you turn into God. Your existence and your bliss prevail when you relinquish the quality of individuality.

Your existence as an individual should be entirely eliminated. This is prescribed in order to attain the state of Brahman. There is no sacred hour to begin this practice. Waiting for a sacred hour to begin your spiritual practice, implies that time has invaded the timeless Ultimate Truth. Adhere to the principle 'I am Brahman' and behave accordingly. Remaining immersed in your True Nature is as good as singing the hymns of the Lord.

In spite of existing in the form of bliss, the Lord wanted to enjoy more bliss. 'Let me see myself, be conscious of myself', thought the Lord. He then dreamed into being all forms, elements and relationships between them. Everything that appears is only in his dream. But before the dream and after the dream, He is alone.

When there is no knowledge of Life-energy there is nothing. Where there is nothing, there is Space. When the Life energy moves it is distinguished as Wind and from there it transforms into fire, water and earth; the common factor being the Life-energy, also known as Chaitanya.

Despite permeating the five elements and maintaining harmony between them, the Self does not make its presence felt.

As soon as we assume the body to be the doer of all actions, the organs of the body get obsessed with desires. We then become extremely small. This is how the Lord, the Almighty, is reduced to a trivial state, 'imprisoned' in the body, existing in all bodies and enjoying and enduring all experiences.

Haunted by the concept, 'I am the body', the worldly life has come into being. What is pleasure after all? Whatever gives pleasing sensations to the nerves. Desires are conceptual and hence pleasure arising out of the fulfillment of desires is not true. Pleasures have to be enjoyed and then forgotten, as they cannot be stored. The ten desires of ten different organs pull the 'individual' in ten different directions. In a bid to fulfill them, harmony is lost and the individual is further entangled in 'I' and 'mine'. The Self, despite being immortal, is afflicted by death because it harbors the desire to reap the fruits of actions and the cycle of death and birth continues, on and on.

The sun is steady with respect to the earth, yet it appears to revolve around the earth. Similarly the Self is steady, but revolves in the cycle of 8.4 million births and deaths, because of the identification with the body. By comparison, true joy is satisfaction without concepts, which is Bliss. Once one comes into contact with a Sadguru he can help one escape from the clutches of the cycle of birth and death and also cross the ocean of worldly existence. Illusion is nothing and can be easily overcome by the one who has given up body-consciousness.

One should not harbor doubts within one's mind. One should not be cunning and cheat on Knowledge, which means to be desirous of obtaining Knowledge, but to fall short on worship. Some worship is done only to obtain powers and some to follow ritual, whilst others shun worship.

The modern technological advances that come to this world, with newer and newer innovations, as well as those yet to come, make up a cyclone of Great Illusion. Be certain that you will be held captive by it. Who knows to where the one that is caught by this great cyclone will be carried off? To turn within has become a very difficult task, but one must be prepared to forsake and renounce appearances, in order to find True Joy. *There must be renunciation of karma, by realizing that you are not the doer, the actor. This is necessary, because the sense that is created in our minds, that actions create results and that we have to suffer those results, is a powerful poison.*

Where there is knowledge, without any doubt, there is true Contentment, which is not dependent on anything. You have in you, right now, that by which the whole world moves and you are using it to experience yourself. See what you have! The world 'is', because of It. The Power that easily creates and sustains the universe and the five elements is within you. The body has a particular shape, which it cannot hold onto of its own accord. Consciousness, although it is also in the body, has no shape, whether it wields a body, or not, it is Life, without any bounds or particular form. It is flawless, but because of its capacity to feel and sense the body, it assumes that it *is* the form of the body, which is a foolish blunder; because, with the concept of being a body, it becomes enamoured with the perishable body, demands outer property and possessions, gives the body extraordinary importance and hence suffers lots of sorrow.

The body form is not our Original Existence, but a momentary, unwanted state and this 'body consciousness' makes you forget the discernment of pure reason. Therefore you must be very alert and even when you lie asleep on your bed you must remember that you are Brahman, the God of gods and have peace. Never forget the brilliant truth that you are formless, clean, pure and stainless. You must be steady in that containment, which remains unmoved by anything. You are the all-pervading God and there is no 'other'. There is nothing like a 'second', or 'another'.

When one is beyond his physical body, beyond the perceptible, what can be said about him? The Self is devoid of any shape, so how can we describe its qualities, or lack of qualities? One who understands himself as the Self is beyond sin or merit and has transcended the boundaries of visible forms. He is victorious and drinks Immortal Nectar. Birth and death are gone, being an individual is gone. He who was in the body has become Shiva, with the absolute power of Brahman. The Supreme Self has attained victory and resumed His Kingdom."

Dasbodh

Carrier of light in an age of darkness.

Sri Samarth Ramdas, the author of Dasbodh, was alive several centuries ago, when India was under Muslim rule and society was in a major state of decay. This authoritarian rule had devastating repercussions for Indian culture and made life a living hell for the have-nots. The Indians were following in the footsteps of their new leaders for petty gains and those who dared to speak against them were thrown to the gallows, or killed outright.

The Brahmins were being unreligious, the warrior caste were taking pride in serving the foreign rulers, the traders were cutting immoral deals and the common man was left confused and rudderless. The situation was chaotic, to say the least.

People had become selfish and the Hindu religion existed in name only. Sri Samarth was distressed by the plight of the people and realized that until the foreign rule ended there could not be healthy growth in society, or a return to more spiritual values. With this in mind he called on King Shivaji to work on deposing the foreign rulers and called upon the saints not to remain aloof, as he too would have preferred to be, but to “descend” into society to re-teach a moral code and uproot the rot that had set in. He spoke of the need for discipline and effort, matched by morality and sincerity and he offered guidance on sane behaviour, including how to identify fools and how to discern wisdom.

On the topic of the human body Sri Samarth had two important things to say, the first being about the potential that it represents for achieving liberation: “No other body, of any other species inhabiting this earth, is capable of yielding the results that the human body can. For those humans who are prepared to put in the effort, they can choose between good and bad, through application of wisdom and common sense, to shed the ego and realize the Self.

One should use the body for the cause of good, rather than spoiling it by using it to satisfy the desires. In the first case you stand a chance of getting to God and in the second, condemning it to the gallows. You have already wasted much of your time by foolishly falling into the trap of illusion and delusion, by falling into the trap created by Maya (illusion); thinking that the visible world is the truth and thus harming yourself immeasurably.

Being born as a human should be considered a great blessing and the human body should be used not for one's own good, which is an absolute waste of such a wonderful gift, but rather for others and for liberation."

Sri Ramdas then speaks of those who focus their desires on material pleasures and thus remain entangled in the body-mind-intellect conglomerate, saying that they have to undergo the vicious cycle of birth and death, in which case the body is not such a blessing, but rather a curse:

"Birth is the seedling of the tree of grief and the seed of birth is lust, which is the root cause of all the grief in the world.

Birth is forgetting the happiness which lies within the Self and therefore trying to acquire it through the body; which in turn becomes the cause for more birth.

Birth is a synonym for the immense love of the material, organic and sensual pleasures. It is bound by hope which is never met with. The body calls for all the grief and gets it, on account of Maya, which is nothing but hell, itself.

The human being has to suffer indescribably for having come to stay in this jail of the body and the suffering starts right from conception, in the womb, as a foetus, where it is bound in a small space, surrounded by all the contents of the intestines. Every moment it must be praying to God to relieve it of this horrendous agony.

Then comes the birth, which is stressful and dangerous for both mother and child, either could die at this time.

Once the child is born, it forgets the misery it had to endure in the womb, but cries out with the new challenge of being thrust into this world. If, in the course of its life, this person then does all sorts of immoral and unethical things, then he/she has to suffer the troubles of hell, according to deeds performed when alive in the body. The worship of body, money, politics, selfishness, desires and lust lead to consequences which are impossible to imagine by earthly standards.

Hope and love are the handcuffs of this life. However, if you consider your body as a medium for reaching God, then you can utilize this body for the right purpose, which is done by persistently reminding yourself that you are the Self, the Atman, into which this 'I' is dissolved. Hold onto this and act accordingly, otherwise you have wasted this birth and body and have to be born again."

Moving on from the human body and its implications, Sri Samarth, shares the following pearls of wisdom with us, in his book, Dasbodh: "Anything that appears with a form will be destroyed at the time of the dissolution of the universe. Only the True Form (Swaroop) of the Self exists eternally. That which is the Essence of everything and is eternal and is not false, is That which is permanent and pervasive everywhere.

That which is the 'True Nature of God' is also called the 'True Nature of the Self'. He also has innumerable different names aside from these. The name is also used as an indication in order to understand the examples given, but the form or nature of the Self is always beyond the name. It fills the inside and outside of all objects, but it is hidden from the world. It is as if it does not exist, even though it is very close to us.

Hearing about God like this, there arises a desire to see God. However, when trying to see God, only the visible world is seen, all around. When trying to see it, only the objects appearing to the eyes are seen. By seeing in this way one feels some satisfaction, but this is not the true vision of God.

Whatever is seen as 'the visible' gets destroyed. Regarding this, it is said in the *Upanishads* that whatever is seen with the eyes is not one's True Nature. The Nature of the Self is without any appearance and is inconceivable, whereas that which is visible and appears, is illusory and unreal. It is told in the science of Vedanta that whatever has an appearance is destructible.

When trying to see, only visible appearances are seen. Reality is beyond what is visible. With Self-experience it is seen to be both within and beyond all that is visible. What indication can be given about That which is inconceivable, invisible and without attributes? Understand that your True Nature is itself the nearest thing.

Just as everything appears in space and time is permeating everything; in the same way, understand that the Lord of the Universe is inside and outside of everything.

The True Nature of God is such that it is in the water but does not get wet, it is in the earth but it does not get worn out and it is in the fire but does not get burned. It is in the mire but doesn't get drowned, it is in the air but does not fly off, and it is in the gold but it cannot be formed into ornaments. Like this, it pervades everywhere, yet it cannot be comprehended.

That which creates divisions or distinctions, in undivided oneness, is called the pride, or ego. Some signs of the nature of this pride will be given so that it can be easily recognized. Listen with alertness to this explanation: Pride reaches toward the Reality as if it was a part of the experience and then tries to express words to describe the extraordinary experience.

Pride says: 'I am the Reality now'. That itself is the form of pride. It spontaneously makes distinctions in the formless. The delusion of pride is such that it says: 'I am Brahman', without having true knowledge of Self.

This becomes apparent by looking with the most subtle of the subtlest seeing. Imagination brings about desires and intention while Reality is beyond the imagination. Therefore the end of the endless cannot be comprehended.

Explanations that progress in a logical order and fanciful conjectures are all within the realm of the differences of words. The discrimination of 'wordless silence' must be pursued inwardly. First take the apparent meaning of words and then recognize what is being indicated by the words. Once what is being indicated by the words is seen, the apparent meaning doesn't remain.

Statements such as 'All is Brahman' and 'Pure Brahman', are only words that are used to indicate some deeper meaning. However, when discovering That which is being indicated, the indications themselves don't remain. 'All' and 'Pure' are but two perspectives about Brahman that exist only in words. When one's attention becomes fixed in That which is being indicated, then both concepts, that everything is Brahman, and that Brahman is pure and untainted by anything, drop away.

That which is being indicated must be experienced. Here the words that are being spoken to indicate it are of no use. When that 'main principle' is experienced, the desire to begin speaking about it does not arise.

When the four types of speech (the inner inspiration of sound, sound at the level of the heart, sound at the level of the throat and the sound that is actually spoken aloud) all disappear, where is there any place for articulate language and skill with words?

Once a word is spoken, it immediately disappears by itself. Where is there anything permanent about speech? This is the actual case; no proof is required to observe this fact. All words are truly perishable; accordingly, all opinions and arguments will fall away.

Concepts such as 'All is Brahman' and 'Pure Brahman', don't exist in the actual experience itself.

Listen to the signs of experience and understand that experience means that there is 'nothing other'. Listen to the signs of this Oneness, without other. 'Nothing other' means that *there is no other thing*.

In self-surrender all attachments are broken and the Self remains alone by itself. For the Self there is no sense of separate selfhood. This is itself the sign of detachment. These words are being used only so that you might understand. Otherwise, how can That which is being indicated be told in words?

By listening to the explanations of the great statements of the saints, one begins to easily understand. By listening to the explanations about Reality one should find the attributeless Brahman. In order to understand one must see oneself by oneself.

Without speaking, the meaning of That which is being indicated should be considered again and again, while remaining dissolved in it. Thus it is said that the absence of speaking is the adornment of great men. Words have become silent, and the *Vedas* fall speechless saying 'not this, not that' (*neti, neti*). This must now become your actual Self-experience.

If, after having obtained experience, one continues to indulge in conjecture and guesswork, this is a sign of obstinate pride. This is basically saying: 'I am ignorant, I cannot understand anything'. Instead say: 'I am false, my speech is false, and my behaviour is false.' 'I' and 'mine' are false, everything is false. All is only imagination.

For 'me' and 'mine' there is no place at all. All my speech is entirely meaningless. All of this is the nature of manifestation, which is illusion and all of manifestation is false.

Manifestation and the 'Primordial Being' prior to manifestation, are both bound to disappear. So how can there be any independently existing individual?

How can there be anything still remaining when everything has disappeared, without anything left over?

It is like breaking the silence to say 'I am silence'.

Therefore, don't break the silence.

While doing, don't do anything.

While being, don't be anything in particular.

This is only understood through the power of discrimination

God, though present in all forms in the subtlest manner, still remains elusive from his creations, as is the case with every creator. One should never doubt the fact that the Creator is different from the universe, for the simple reason that the creator is formless, shapeless and unseen.”

The Ashtavakra Gita

A sage assists in the Self-realisation of King Janaka.

The dialogue between the sage, Ashtavakra and his student, King Janaka, begins with this question from the king: “How can knowledge be acquired? How can liberation be attained? How can renunciation come about?”

Ashtavakra answers as follows: “My child, if you are seeking liberation, shun the objects of the senses like poison and seek forgiveness, sincerity, kindness, contentment and truth, like you would seek nectar. You are neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, nor space. You are the witness of those five elements, as Consciousness. Understanding this is liberation. If you detach yourself from the identification with the body and remain relaxed in and as Consciousness, you will, this very moment, be happy, at peace and free from bondage.

Unattached and formless, you are the witness of the entire universe. Know this and be happy. Right and wrong, happiness and sorrow are all attributes of the mind, not of you.

O all-pervading One, you are neither the doer nor the enjoyer. You, who have ever and always been free of all such attachments, you are the one observer and as such, you have always been free.

Your only bondage has been that you saw someone else as the observer. You were bitten by the deadly black serpent of the ego and you therefore considered yourself as the doer. Drink the nectar of the faith that you are not the doer and be happy. Having burnt down the forest of ignorance, with the fire of the conviction ‘I am the One, Pure Consciousness’, discard all grief and be happy.

You are that Consciousness - Supreme Bliss upon which appears this phenomenal manifestation.

The one who considers himself free, is indeed free, whilst the one who considers himself bound remains in bondage. The saying 'As one thinks, so one becomes', is certainly a true one.

The Atman is the sole witness, all pervading, perfect and free, Consciousness; actionless, unattached, desireless and at peace with itself. It is only through an illusion that it appears to be involved with delusion. Give up the illusion that you are the individual self, together with all external and internal self-modifications and meditate on the Atman; the immutable, non-dual Consciousness.

Long have you been caught in the bonds of identification with the body. Sever them now with the sword of Knowledge and be happy. It is you who pervade this universe and this universe exists in you. You are truly pure Consciousness by nature, so be not petty-minded. Know that which has form to be the unreal and the formless to be the real.

Just as the all-pervading space is both inside and outside the pot, so also the eternal and all-pervading Consciousness is immanent in all beings and objects."

King Janaka was ripe for this truth and spontaneously responded, "O the root of misery is indeed in dualism. There is no remedy for it other than the realisation that all objects of perception are unreal and that I am the one pure consciousness. O, in me, the limitless ocean, the movement in the mind has produced the many worlds, like the wind produces diverse waves on the ocean.

When the wind subsides and the mind becomes quiet, the ship of the conceptualised universe sinks. How remarkable that in Me, the limitless ocean, the waves of the individual selves arise according to their inherent nature, meet and play with one another for a while and then disappear."

Ashtavakra's response to King Janaka is to play devil's advocate, in order to find out if his disciple has truly understood the teaching, in all its subtleties and apparent contradictions, saying thus: "How is it, that having understood your true nature as the serene indestructible One, you continue to be attached to the acquisition of wealth? Having known that you are That in which arises the phenomenal universe, like the waves in the ocean, why do you run about like a wretched being?"

It is indeed strange that the sense of 'mine-ness' should continue to prevail in a sage who has realised the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self. It is indeed strange that one abiding in the supreme transcendent non-duality and intent on liberation should be subject to lust and weakened by amorous activities. It is strange that one who is supposed to have developed dispassion towards this world and the next, who is supposed to be able to discriminate between the intransient and the transient and is in search of emancipation, should yet fear the dissolution of the body.

Why should the serene one, who is aware of the emptiness of all phenomenal objects, have any preference for things as being acceptable or unacceptable? He who has ceased to conceptualise and is, therefore, free from attachment to sense objects, beyond the interrelated pairs of opposites and free from volition, accepts with equanimity whatever comes his way in the normal course."

Janaka respectfully reassures his guru that the ego has indeed been annihilated with these words: "Who can prevent the Self-realised one, who has known the unity of the unmanifest Noumenon and the phenomenal manifestation, from acting as he wishes? Of the four kinds of created beings, from Brahman to a blade of grass, it is only the wise one who is capable of renouncing both desire and aversion.

Rare is the man who knows the Noumenon as one without a second, the Lord of the universe. He does what he considers worth doing and has no fear from any quarter. I am like the ocean and the phenomenal universe is like a wave. This is knowledge. There is therefore no question of any renouncement, or any acceptance, or any dissolution.

In Me, the boundless ocean, the bark of the universe gets tossed about by the winds of its own inherent nature. I am not affected. In Me, the limitless ocean, let the waves of the universe arise and then disappear, according to their inherent nature. I experience neither an expansion, nor a contraction. In Me, the limitless ocean, exists the illusion of the universe. Being formless, I am supremely tranquil. In this I do abide. The subjective Self is not in the object, nor is the object in the subjective Self, which is infinite and without any taint of any kind. It is free from attachment and desire and thus tranquil. In this do I abide.”

Ashtavakra is pleased with Janaka's response and in the same spirit offers some pearls of wisdom: "It means bondage when the mind desires something or grieves for something, rejects or accepts anything, feels happy or angry with anything. It means liberation when the mind does not desire or grieve, or reject or accept, or feel happy or angry.

It is bondage when the mind is attached to any sense experience. It is liberation when the mind is detached from all sense experiences. When the 'me' is present, it is bondage; when the 'me' is not present it is liberation. Having understood this, it should be easy for you to refrain from accepting or rejecting anything. Who is it that is concerned with the interrelated pairs of opposites, such as duties to be performed and acts to be avoided? When do they end and for whom do they end?

Enquiring thus, through indifference to the world, proceed to remain without desire and volition.

Rare indeed, my child, is that blessed person whose desire for life, enjoyment and learning has been extinguished by merely observing the ways of the world. The man of wisdom becomes serene through the realisation that this world is transient and tainted by the triple misery - from one's own organism, other organisms and acts of nature - and is therefore without substance, contemptible and to be discarded.

Is there any stage or age when the interrelated pairs of opposites do not affect people? The one who disidentifies himself from them and is content with whatever comes to him, spontaneously, in the ordinary course, attains perfection.

Who will not attain tranquillity that, seeing the diversity of opinions among the many seers, saints and yogis, becomes totally indifferent? Is he not the true guru who, having apperceived his true nature as pure Consciousness, through indifference, equanimity and through dialectical reasoning, has saved himself from the metempsychosis of samsara?

The moment you perceive the different phenomena in the universe as they truly are, that is to say, different patterns and combinations of the same five basic elements, you will at once be free from bondage and you will be able to abide in your true Self.

Intentions are the root of samsara. Therefore the abandoning of intention and volition means dispassion with the world and then you can live anywhere. Forsake desire, which is the enemy, material prosperity, which leads to much mischief and also the performance of good deeds with the aim of achieving something, which is the cause of these two – cultivate indifference towards everything. Regard friends, lands, wealth, houses, wives, gifts and other such items of good fortune as a dream, or a juggler's show, lasting but a short time. *Know that wherever there is desire there is samsara.*

With sincere, intense dispassion, go beyond desire and thus be happy. It is in desire that bondage exists and liberation is considered to be in the destruction of desire. Only through non-attachment to the phenomenal world does one attain the perennial joy of the realisation of Self.

You are the pure Consciousness. The phenomenal universe is inert and illusory. Ignorance as such, too, does not exist. Why therefore your quest for knowledge?

Kingdoms, sons, wives, bodies and sensual pleasures have been lost to you, birth after birth, even though you were attached to them; enough, therefore, of prosperity, desires and good deeds. The mind did not find repose in that dreary wilderness of samsara. For how many lives have you not done hard, painful labours of body, mind and speech? At least now, desist.

In the conviction that adversity and prosperity come in their turn as effects of past actions, as causality; the man of wisdom, contented, with his senses in passive restraint, wants nothing and grieves for nothing. In the conviction that happiness and misery, birth and death are parts of the natural process of causality, the man of wisdom, without any need to accomplish anything, is free from anxiety and does not identify himself with anything he happens to be doing.

In the conviction that it is anxiety and nothing else that is the root cause of misery in this world, the man of wisdom, with his desires annihilated, remains free from anxiety, happy and contented. In the conviction 'I am not this body, nor is the body mine; I am pure Consciousness', the man of wisdom is indifferent to what has been achieved and what remains to be achieved and lives in a natural state of non-volition, which is akin to the noumenal state.

In the conviction that this manifested universe, wondrous though it is in the variety and diversity of its phenomena, is truly illusory, the man of wisdom, without any desires, identified with the pure Consciousness, remains in noumenal peace.

O, pure Consciousness that you are, do not concern yourself with affirmations and negation. Abide in the silence of the eternal bliss that you are and live happily. Give up conceptualising, altogether. Have no beliefs or concepts of any kind. You are the ever-free Consciousness. How can thinking help you in any way?

You may listen to diverse scriptures, or even give learned discourses on them, but abidance in the Self cannot happen unless all that is forgotten. You may keep yourself occupied in work, or enjoy the pleasures of the world, or indulge in meditation and yet you will find that there is an inner urge towards that primal state which is prior to all phenomenality, in which all desire for phenomenal objects is extinguished.

All keep exerting themselves and yet find themselves unhappy. They do not realise that it is this very volitional effort that brings about unhappiness. It is only through this understanding that the blessed one reaches awakening. Happiness belongs to none other but that master-idler, to whom even the natural act of opening and closing the eyes seems an affliction.

When the mind is free from the pairs of opposites, like 'This is done, but that is not yet done', it acquires an indifference, alike, to righteousness, wealth, desire for sensual pleasure, as well as liberation.

One who has an aversion for sense objects is considered a renunciate and one who covets them is considered sensual, but one who neither rejects or covets is unconcerned with them. *O, the knower of Truth never experiences misery in this world, for the whole universe is filled by himself.*

Rare in this world is the one on whom experiences do not leave any impressions and who does not hanker after any experiences still to be enjoyed. The man of wisdom does not wish for the dissolution of the universe, nor is he interested in its continuance. The blessed one lives perfectly contented with whatever turns up in life."

Song of the renunciate.

Dattatreya's powerful "Avadhuta Gita".

The Avadhuta Gita is one of the purest and most profound teachings in existence. These are the eloquent and compelling words of one who has realized his Self and who spontaneously bursts into song, like a bird whose joy is bubbling over and who must give voice to the flow of Spirit.

Dattatreya's function was to spread the universality of true religion. No matter what sect or religion the true seeker follows, eventually he comes under the guidance of Lord Dattatreya, the Eternal Spiritual Guide of all mankind. The life of Dattatreya showed us that giving selflessly is the true renunciation and sacrifice. He says, "Not by action, not by progeny, nor even by self, but by renunciation alone is immortality attained. Real renunciation is the giving up of 'I' and 'mine', not the mere abandoning of duties. Living a selfless life requires giving up one's ego. This consists of giving up the idea, or feeling, of 'doership', 'enjoyership' and the resultant anxiety for and attachment to the fruits of our actions.

By performing all our duties with this changed outlook, our mind will be freed from agitation and attain the restful state called 'equanimity', or the state where there is no mind.

This is the state of Bliss that every soul ultimately aspires to."

One of the legacies of Dattatreya is the teaching known as Ashtanga Yoga (the eightfold path of Yoga) which he taught thousands of years ago, later to be codified by Patanjali in sutra form, as follows:

1. Yama – non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-receiving of any gifts.
2. Niyama – cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study and self-surrender to God.

Yama and Niyama are moral training and discipline and form the basis of Yoga. As these two become established, the Yogi will begin to realize the fruits of his/her practice.

3. Asana – healing and balancing postures.
4. Pranayama – ‘Prana’ is the life-force, ‘yama’ is control. Pranayama consists of breath-control exercises.
5. Pratyahara – withdrawal of senses from sense objects.
6. Dharana – concentration.
7. Dhyana – meditation.
8. Samadhi – the transcendental or super conscious state of knowing oneness with God.

The principle tenets of the Dattatreya tradition are:

1. Everyone should know oneself first and with that should also know one’s own reality, which is but God.
2. One should realize the relationship between God, man and creation; the underlying kinship, unity and oneness of these three entities. Brahman is the immanent and all-pervading reality in all matter; the origin, the support and sustenance of all.
3. To obtain this vision and discern this truth, one should conquer one’s ego through Yoga and renunciation.
4. The guru’s grace is indispensable. One has to surrender oneself totally and unreservedly at the feet of the guru. His grace awakens Illumination, by which we can recognize the Reality of Brahman, which is the real self of all.

Apart from this the disciples should:

- Have purity of thought, word and deed.
- Remember the Lord’s name and meditate on it.
- Have compassion and love for all beings.
- Render selfless service at the feet of the Guru and surrender completely and unconditionally.

The Upanishads describe Dattatreya with glowing praise and enumerate his great qualities. Typical of most dropouts of the ancient Pagan world, he lived completely naked, for this was a great spiritual era when most world-renunciates were naked or near naked. The Sanskrit idiom used to describe this condition was “digambara”, having a literal meaning of “clothed in the sky”, or “sky as garment”, but also an idiomatic meaning

that the sadhu was one with his environment. This was the world of Shiva-Shakti where the way of life of Nature was the highest ideal. Civilisation and cities had already appeared, but it was known that only artificial people could live and be produced in them. Legends about the birth of Dattatreya are many and varied. It is stated that he was born on the 14th day after the Full Moon in the month of Margashirsha, which is approximately 6th December, in our calendar. Of the year and place there is no reliable information. Scholars speculate it must have been not less than 4000 years ago.

Dattatreya taught that, “The search for the Absolute, the Supreme Reality, is not one in which we will ever witness mass realisation, for only a few in any age have the karma and mind impressions from past lives to make it possible. This does not mean that realisation and liberation are reserved for a tiny select minority. It is a supreme attainment, from which none can be excluded, but it must be conceived as a process which continues through many lives and rebirths and over countless periods of time.

The safest guide an individual, or guru, can have of one's stage in this long process is the sincerity and intensity of the ‘apparent individual’ as it manifests in the present incarnation. What has taken hundreds of thousands of lives to develop might still be difficult to mature in only the one present life-span.

All spiritual life is a matter of investment in those values which will one day come to maturity. The punishment for neglect is not the wrath of God, but countless lives of misery, pain and frustration. The reward for the diligent is to escape entirely from these things and attain the only true bliss of the Supreme Reality; the essential unity of all things, the equipoise of equanimity, the supreme bliss of harmony, the most perfect unification and the highest consummation of Oneness.”

Dattatreya composed a song of 288 divinely inspired verses, of which I would like to share the first twelve with you, here:

The Avadhuta Gita

Truly it is by the grace of God,
that the knowledge of unity arises within.

Then a person is released, at last
from the great fear of life and death.

All that exists in this world of forms
is nothing but the Self,
How then, shall the Infinite worship itself?
Shiva is one undivided whole.

The five subtle elements that combine to compose this world,
are as illusory as the water in a desert mirage.

To whom then shall I bow my head?
I myself am the Stainless One.

Truly all this universe is only my Self,
it is neither divided, nor undivided.
How can I even assert that it exists?
I can only view it with wonder and awe.

What then is the heart of the highest truth,
the core of knowledge, the wisdom supreme?
It is, "I am the Self, the formless One",
by my very nature I am pervading all.

That One God that shines within everything,
who is formless like the cloudless sky.
Is the pure, stainless Self of all,
without any doubt, that is who I am.

I am the infinite and immutable One,
I am pure Consciousness, without any form.
I don't know how, or to whom
joy and sorrow appear in this world.

I have no mental karma, either good or bad,
 I have no physical karma, either good or bad.
 I have no verbal karma, either good or bad,
 I'm beyond the senses,
 I'm the pure nectar of the knowledge of the Self.

The mind is formless like the sky,
 yet it wears a million faces.
 It appears as images from the past,
 or worldly forms,
 but it is not the Supreme Self.

I'm One, I'm all of this,
 yet I'm undifferentiated, beyond all forms.
 How then do I regard the Self,
 as both the unmanifest and the manifest world?

You also are the One,
 why don't you understand?
 You're the unchanging Self,
 the same within everyone.

You're truly illimitable, the all-pervading Light.
 For you, how can there be any distinction
 between the day and the night?

Understand that the Self is continuous Being,
 the One within all, without any division.
 The "I" is both the subject
 and the supreme object of meditation.

How can you see two
 in that which is One?

Ramana's Epilogue

Unbroken "I, I..." is the infinite ocean.

The ego, the "I" thought, remains only a bubble on it and is called individual soul. The bubble too, is water, for when it bursts it only mixes in the ocean.

When it remains a bubble it is still a part of the ocean.

Ignorant of this simple truth, innumerable methods under different denominations, each again with many modifications, are being taught with great skill and in intricate detail, only to entice the seekers and confuse their minds.

So also are the religions and sects and dogmas... what are they all for?

Only for knowing the Self.

They are aids and practices required for knowing the Self.

Objects perceived by the senses are spoken of as immediate knowledge, but can anything be as direct as the Self, always experienced without the aid of the senses?

Sense perceptions can only be indirect knowledge and not direct knowledge.

Only one's own awareness is direct knowledge.

That is the common experience of one and all.

No aids are needed to know one's own Self.

References and closure

Of the many books dedicated to Ramana's teachings, the one that has had the greatest impact on my life is called "Be as you are"; compiled and edited by David Godman, who was the librarian at Ramana's ashram from 1978 to 1985.

(Ramana left his body in 1950, so it was some years later that David went to live there.)

Nisargadatta Maharaj's teachings are well represented by a book that is widely known and highly acclaimed, namely "I am That". With all due respect for that book and his teachings, if you go further "upstream", in that same lineage, to his teacher, Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, you will strike spiritual gold of immeasurable value. The two volumes, "Master of Self-Realisation" and "Amrut Laya" (The Stateless State) are great treasures that are immensely readable and heavily imbued with Truth; which have called me back for several readings, each. Ranjit Maharaj, like Nisargadatta, was also a student of Siddharameshwar and he offers a fairly direct transmission of wisdom in his book, "Illusion vs. Reality", although I must confess that I find Ranjit's style of communication somewhat challenging.

Siddharameshwar speaks very highly of Sri Eknathi Bhagawat and so it's worth taking a closer look at what he had to say.

A pdf download of his works is available at the following link:

<http://www.sadgurus-saints-sages.com/books/EkanathMaharaj/Sarth%20Shree%20Eknathi%20Bhagwat.pdf> - a translation consisting of 1635 pages, in which there is a strong emphasis on morality for immoral times – somehow appropriate for our modern age, once again.

Ramesh Balsekar, who lived in recent times, (passing in 2009) was strongly influenced by both Ramana and Nisargadatta and has written prolifically; to include the gems "A Duet of One", "Consciousness Speaks" and "The Final Truth".

David Carse, a carpenter from Vermont, offers a profound and uncluttered perspective, in his book “Perfect Brilliant Stillness”, as does Randall Friend, in “You are no thing”.

Other teachers, whose works are highly recommended, include HWL Poonja (Papaji), Gangaji, Eckhart Tolle, Gilbert Shultz, Wayne Liquorman, Sailor Bob Adamson and Sogyal Rinpoche, with his masterpiece “The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying”.

Four teachers that have a particularly high presence on YouTube are Mooji, Robert Adams, Rupert Spira and Shunyamurti. Robert Adams spent three years with Ramana, from age 18 onwards, which had a profound impact on him and ultimately led to his awakening. All of his YouTube talks are highly recommended. Find out more about him by following this link: <http://www.robertadamsinfinityinstitute.org/>

As for Mooji, he is loved by many for his big heart and infinite compassion. If you are in search of a living teacher, he resides in Portugal and his satsangs are immensely popular.

Shunyamurti is the author of “The Transformational Imperative” and he offers a multitude of talks, available on YouTube, which elucidate the obstacles that we face as seekers, for example:

Enter the nothingness with contentment:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddDO0gKoL_Y

Living in joy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8e4B2kS7rl>

Contemplation precipitates Presence:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeGB_i9Fn5A

From the God of money to the God of love:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Hu6SfANpkQ>

The paths to Self-realisation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEFCiBztnIA>

Why positive affirmations don't work:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrcjl5v8HwQ>

Atmananda Krishna Menon, who was mentioned in passing in the chapter on Rupert Spira, is a Self-realised being that deserves special mention and further investigation. His name caught my attention only a year ago and I am delighted to have access to his teachings, which are proving to be amongst the most direct that I have come across. The story of his awakening is very inspiring, as were his words and actions. He commands profound respect and has been compared with Ramana Maharshi, by those who are aware of his teachings.

All of the great teachers recommend that devotion should continue, even after realisation and this devotion can have many forms. I find that beginning and ending each day with passages from beautifully crafted renditions of the highest teachings, is a tremendous aid for crossing the ocean of Samsara, by focusing attention on what is Real vs illusory.

In closing, I would like to share with you some words that were written by Nitya Tripta, in his preface to “Notes on the Spiritual Discourses of Shri Atmananda”, which is a rendition of the teachings and life story of Atmananda Krishna Menon.

These words apply to all of the Self-realised beings discussed in this book, along with others, not mentioned here:

“A Sage is a paradox. This is because life is only an appearance and therefore an untruth, while the Sage is the ultimate Truth itself - the impersonal.

Shri Atmananda held that one should be known only for the principle one stands for; which is why he would not agree to the writing of his life story whilst he lived. Nevertheless, modern practice obliges the author, or editor, to write a brief life sketch of the person who shines through the book.

A record of the phenomenal facts and aspects of his life is needed, in order to avoid wrong and exaggerated versions of his life gaining currency, when genuine facts are no longer available. I make no attempt to point out anything extraordinary or miraculous in his life, my object is quite the contrary; but of course there was one thing quite extraordinary in him.

He visualised the ultimate Truth and stood established in it. Therefore his so-called 'life story', as far as he is concerned, is a misrepresentation of himself. It is the transcendental Essence, which the Sage is and knows he is, that makes him great in the spiritual realm. Therefore the so called 'life story' of a Sage cannot make anyone understand anything about him. The Sage is impersonal. He has outgrown the shell of his own life, the shell called personality. The personality and the Sage are in two distinct and separate planes. Therefore it is quite futile to scan the life story of a Sage to measure his real worth."

In the past few centuries, when conventional religions were in a position of great power and held sway over human society, the truth had to be taught in secret; but the oppressive yoke of ignorance, which those religions embody, is being dethroned in many ways and the time is right for the truth to be discussed and shared openly. Thankfully, for many of us, this is a new and *potentially* enlightened era in which we are free to receive the teachings and openly practice that which can liberate us, once and for all.

I hereby express my infinite gratitude for the teachings of Ramana Maharshi, as also all of the Self-realised beings that have shown the way back to the kingdom of heaven that lies Within.

Pieter

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