



THE SEARCH FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

You have imagined yourself to be a body, and in this imagination, you are frantically trying to find the secret to the liberation of the body. Maybe you have studied Eastern spiritual traditions, or maybe you have studied Western spiritual traditions. Maybe you have been involved in certain activities of acquisition. All these *doing-to-get* activities are related to the liberation of your body.

Your body cannot be liberated. Your body is doomed to disappearance. Your body is bound by birth, hunger, disease, death, genetics, and environment. However, if you turn your face to that which permeates your body, that which surrounds your body, that which your body arises in, exists because of, and returns to, you meet freedom itself. This meeting is liberation.

People first come to the spiritual search from an egocentric idea of what will be attained. The beginning of the spiritual search is the positive aspect of ego: *I'm tired of suffering. I want to be happy. I hear happiness is the spiritual goal.* The thought *I want to be happy* comes from a developed ego, a functioning, integrated ego.

With courage and guidance, there arises the resolve to turn away from the forces that support ignorance and turn toward the forces that support enlightenment. All of this is immeasurably important.

The concept of enlightenment comes from the recognition or the insight, *My God, I have been living in ignorance. I want to leave ignorance.* This recognition is an evolutionary point in a lifestream.

The search for enlightenment takes innumerable forms. Perhaps first is the attempt to follow the codes and practices of religion. Usually next is the attempt to throw off the code of religion and live by a personal code. There may be superficial hope that in dressing or acting as the Buddhists or Hindus or Sufis dress and act, some of their attainment will transfer. However you have tried to get enlightenment, you have continually come to what appears to be a dead end. At this end, rather than experience the true *end*, you usually begin the search anew with a different code or religion, or a rebellion to all codes and religions.

You cannot find true happiness by *doing anything*. You can experience moments of happiness, certainly. But to recognize you are that which is happiness, you must abandon all vehicles of escape. The end must be experienced. Every *thing* must be given up.

What a surprise to realize that real happiness requires releasing everything! To receive ultimate attainment, finally you must stop trying to *get* anything. The idea of *you* must end. When you give up the idea of enlightenment, you realize what the idea of enlightenment points to.

If you can see that what you *thought* you wanted has not given you what it is you *really* want, then you are ready. You are mature. Maturity has little to do with age or education or spiritual practice. Maturity reflects ruthless intelligence in telling the truth. The truth is that no matter how much you have enjoyed your relations and circumstances, those things have not given you lasting fulfillment.

This recognition is a rude awakening, a disillusionment. Until disillusionment occurs, you wander through life in a trancelike state, attempting to grasp the things you want and reject the things you don't want in the hope of receiving happiness.

Through disillusionment and ruthless truth-telling, you can actually discover what you really want. If by luck what you really want is eternal truth, then have the courage to stop looking in any *thing* for eternal truth. Whether your search is in worldly things, philosophical things, or spiritual things, simply stop looking. When you stop looking, you can discover eternal truth. It takes less than an instant.

You are very lucky if you have the desire for truth, but in your search for truth, what is searched for is an image or an idea or a concept based on what you have been taught, what you read somewhere, what you imagine to be so, or what you remember from some glimpse in the past. These are all mental *things*. They may be beautiful things, but even the subtlest mental concepts are still things.

The great gift offered by my Master, Sri Poonjaji, and by his Master, Sri Ramana Maharshi, is the instruction to *be still*. To not look to the mind as the reference point of who you are.

What can be said about what is revealed in stillness? Much has been said that points to it. Nothing has been said that can touch true revelation. Words such as “infinity,” “eternity,” “grace,” “self,” “truth,” “God,” all point to that which is revealed in absolute stillness. Yet if the moment is conceived as some *thing*, then revelation also points away from truth.

That which you are is untouched by any idea of ignorance or enlightenment. While the concept of enlightenment points to freedom and the truth of your being, if you cling to the concept, you overlook what was present before you ever heard the word. You overlook what is present when your body is in the deepest sleep state. You overlook what remains when your body is long gone.

There comes an instant when, by some miraculous, mysterious grace, you are struck dumb of all words, all concepts, all searching, all striving, all identification. In that moment, an instant out of time, you realize that who you *really* are has never been touched by any concept. This very instant of realization is, in fact, what the concept of enlightenment points to.

The habits and tricks of mind are very strong, of course, and they may reappear. You may think, *Oh, I got it! I'm enlightened now.* This thought is already a trick of mind, based on the supposition that you are some entity separate from consciousness itself, separate from that which is revealed in the instant of the ceasing of mind activity. In thinking *I got it. I'm enlightened,* there must also follow *Oh, I lost it. I'm unenlightened.* You must have been through this many times. These concepts are opposite sides of the same coin, and they both lead to suffering. They both come from the thought *I am some thing, and enlightenment is some other thing I must get to be happy.*

Who you truly are has no need of, no desire for, and no fear of either ignorance or enlightenment. Who you are is free of all concepts. The concept of enlightenment points to realizing that. The concept of ignorance points to not realizing that. The moment you cling to any concept of ignorance or any concept of enlightenment as reality, you are already in the experience of ignorance again. Do you see how subtle the workings of the mind are?

Mind includes all thought, whether mental, physical, emotional, or circumstantial. All trickery of mind is based on the idea that you are a *thing*. You are no *thing* at all. Everything that appears, appears in the vastness of eternal truth. When you identify yourself as a thing—mental, physical, emotional, or circumstantial—and you believe this identification to be real, you overlook the reality of the vastness of being.

Realization is so utterly simple, and this simplicity is what has held it as the deepest secret, inherently protected by the corrupting power of the mind. All striving, all practicing, all comparing, and all codes are realized as irrelevant in the vastness of this utter simplicity. In the moment of realization, there is ultimate freedom. The radiance of eternal truth melts the mind into blissful submission to the unnameable. If you cling even slightly to any *thing*, then once again, the mind is caught in misidentification, and suffering is experienced.

The opportunity for your particular mindstream is to realize that you are the animating force that gives the mindstream its apparent power. This gift from Ramana, through Papaji, is the invitation to stop midstream and recognize who you are. This can be realized immediately in simply being still. You will never realize it by searching for it in thoughts. You may have intellectual understanding, but you will never be fully satisfied until you embrace the truth of who you are.

You cannot *make* stillness. You *are* stillness. Be who you are. Be still—absolutely, completely still—and see what is before any thought, concept, or image of who, what, when, how, or why.

Stillness is presence of being. You *are* that presence of being. Receive yourself. Drink yourself. Be nourished by yourself. Begin your exploration of the limitless wonder of yourself.

I do not mean explore your thoughts. You have explored your thoughts, and they have taken you as far as they can take you. I do not mean explore your emotions, your feelings, your sensations, or your circumstances. Explore your *self*—that which is before, during, and after all objects of awareness. THAT. That presence of being is who you are.

I am not attempting to teach you this. There is no way possible to teach who you are. There is no way possible to learn who you are. The message I bring is simply that in the heart of awareness, you recognize without a shadow of a doubt the truth of your own being.

All that is required for that recognition is to pull your attention back from the usual fixations and preoccupations. Let attention rest in the truth of satsang, formless and present as the core of being.

There is nothing that keeps you from the realization of your inherent, permanent, present freedom except your imagination that somebody or something is keeping you from that. Whether that somebody is called “me and my personality, or “them and what they did to me” or “what they might do to me” or “what they are doing to me,” it is all just a story, an endless commentary based on nothing.



Someone once said in satsang, “Enlightenment is retroactive.” It is true. You will see that your whole past is both perfect and nonexistent. Once you recognize the inherent, permanent truth at the core of all experiences, you will see that truth has always been present, and life has always been about that. Sometimes it has appeared in distorted, twisted, ugly, ignorant ways, but still your whole life has always been about that.

This is the divine birth present everywhere, in everyone. Not a special divine birth, but that which can never be separate from divinity. Birth, death, relationships, emptiness, fullness, existence, and nonexistence all come from the divine, exist because of the grace of the divine, and return finally into the divine.



What is enlightenment? Is it every single moment keeping the awareness on awareness?

Enlightenment is a word that points to the recognition of totality as self. Unfortunately, the word “enlightenment” has become conceptualized as the experiential byproduct that results from that recognition. True enlightenment is not limited to any state of mind.

True enlightenment recognizes what is present before, during, and after any notion of enlightenment. That which is unaffected by either the state of enlightenment or the state of unenlightenment.



Enlightenment, self-realization, is the answer to the question “Who am I?” But to aid in this discovery, it is extremely helpful to start telling the truth about what it is you mean when you say the word *I*.

I is the word we speak more than any other word. What are the typical definitions for *I*? The most obvious have to do with the body: *I* want some food. *I* need some sleep.



At a certain level of development, you begin to get in touch with another body, the emotional body: *I feel angry. I feel happy.*

Deeper than the physical and emotional bodies is the soul body. If you are lucky enough to get that far, it is extraordinary to be in touch with the soul as *I*. This is where most people stop inquiry, because the purity, luminosity, and radiance of the soul are quite exquisite. The soul as *I* doesn't exclude the body or the emotions; it is simply more pure.

But the soul as *I* is not the end of *I*; it's just the way in. If inquiry doesn't stop with the definition of soul as *I*, then it is possible to discover *I* as *everything*, *I* as *totality*. True *I* does not exclude the body, the emotions, or the soul. It permeates all of that because it sees all of that. It sees itself in all realms and domains. Self-realization is simply the realization of that.

Whatever role *I* may be playing as *me*, whatever feeling *I* may be having, whatever *I* as the body is doing, it is possible to see everything that appears in consciousness as oneself.

Maybe you have heard this before. Maybe you are thinking you know what I'm talking about. But you haven't really heard it before, because no one has yet said it. The truth of *I* has never really been said, and it has never really been heard, because whatever is said or heard still infers some kind of exclusion. Even the word "inclusion" somehow excludes exclusion.

What is it that can *really* include both inclusion and exclusion?

Yes! You catch it! That is who you are.

Certain words such as "awareness" get used, because awareness comes very close to it. However you are identifying yourself, awareness is always present. Throughout physical identification, emotional identification, soul identification, cosmic identification, or identification with the realms of hell, awareness is the constant.

Awareness is a good start, but what I have noticed in spiritual circles is that the recognition of oneself as awareness often shifts to identification with certain *states* of awareness. You might hear someone say, "I was

in awareness most of the day, and then I lost it.” This is not what I’m talking about. I’m speaking about what cannot be lost. I’m pointing to what is aware of losing what you thought was awareness.

If you have heard what I have to say, you already know that I don’t put any stock in levels of enlightenment or levels of unenlightenment. This is neither my message nor my invitation. I really don’t care what someone has realized or not realized. I don’t care how good or bad you have been. That’s not the point of our meeting. It is something much closer. The context of our meeting is only to discover the truth of *I*. Anything else is irrelevant. Anything else is just part of the texture and flavor of every aspect of being, the whole mandala. Yet all of it, every aspect, whether physical, emotional, joyful, difficult, or tedious, is valuable to the point of our meeting. All the willingness and all the resistance are welcome in true satsang.

I have never been in a meeting where I did not gain enormously by discovering myself again as you. I am not speaking to you from someplace other than you. We are speaking as one self. I see you as myself, not as someone that I have something to give to. Whenever I am with you, I am giving more of myself to myself, in whatever way it shows itself, and I invite you to play this way, too.