

Editor's Introduction

When I first met Adyashanti in the Fall of 2004, I was struck by the original and fresh way he taught about spiritual awakening. Although he honored his Zen lineage, he emphasized the importance of not relying on a specific teacher or method for realization. Instead, he talked about how important it is to look to our own direct experience and fearlessly explore the territory of our own lives. He also insisted that it is a myth that spiritual awakening is a rare phenomenon available only to a select few—such as people who have meditated in caves for decades or who wear special robes. He went further to say that this myth about the rarity of awakening can actually be an obstacle to our own process of discovery, because we believe in a limitation that is not real but self-imposed.

In retrospect, I think Adya (as he is called by friends and students) was speaking from the perspective of someone sitting atop the crest of a wave: a wave that is beginning to break in our lifetime. As Adya points out in Chapter 1, more and more people with varied backgrounds and histories of religious experience are beginning to describe “spiritual awakening”—an unshakable realization that who we are is the oneness of life—as the most important transformation of their lives. In the past few years, there appears to have been a shift in the collective perception of what is possible; spiritual awakening is no longer the domain of elite practitioners, but is suddenly within the reach of all of us.

As a publisher who has been making spiritual wisdom teachings available for over two decades, I am both thrilled about this new wave of interest in awakening and a bit concerned about the potential confusion, misunderstandings, and distortions that often accompany the idea of realization. To begin with, people mean very different things by the term *spiritual awakening*. I often wonder if people understand not only what is gained through this process, but also—and perhaps more important—what is *lost*. Additionally, as spiritual awakening has become more and more popularized, I have seen many people talk about their awakening from an ego perspective, co-opting the claim of awakening to somehow feel better and “more awake” than other people. But what troubles me the most is the number of people who deny anything in their experience—be it anger, depression, or family

trouble—that contradicts their idea of what it means to be an awakened person.

A little over a year ago, I was on the telephone with Adya, complaining about this phenomenon—about meeting so many people who seemed to misunderstand spiritual awakening and who are actually distancing themselves from their moment-to-moment experience in the name of being awake. Adya mentioned that he was actually lecturing quite a bit on just this very topic—on the misconceptions, pitfalls, and delusions that can occur after an initial experience of spiritual awakening. I immediately and with great enthusiasm asked Adya if he would deliver a series of talks on this topic so that Sounds True could publish these teachings in both audio and text form. He agreed, and the result is *The End of Your World: Uncensored Straight Talk on the Nature of Enlightenment*.

As Adya states in Chapter 1, there are very few resources available for people who have had an initial experience of spiritual awakening and want to understand how the process continues and unfolds. May this book be a helpful guide and further catalyst for this greatest of adventures.

Tami Simon

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