

ONLY THAT

The Life and Teaching
of Sailor Bob Adamson

Compiled and edited
by
Kalyani Lawry

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ONLY THAT: THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF
SAILOR BOB ADAMSON

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Foreword

“All phenomena are like the sky and the characteristic feature of the sky is its natural condition. Everything abides in this natural condition. No phenomena manifesting to perception can be altered from their authentic state.

“Nobody in the past who has set out on the path has reached the destination by persisting in seeking and striving. Nobody who has undertaken action has ever achieved the fruit. Nothing can be altered from the natural condition. All abides therein.”

This quote, from a Dzogchen text from over two thousand years ago, points to the non-dual essence that has always and ever been just this and nothing else. That effortless recognition is the natural way of abiding. May the effortless recognition occur through the reading of this book, as it has in the writing expressing effortlessly through the pattern labelled Kalyani.

Bob Adamson
Melbourne, Australia
March 2010

PART 1



The Life

A Biography of Sailor Bob Adamson

Preface

My first recollection of Bob Adamson arises from March 1974 as he walked into the large front room of a house in Melbourne, Australia, where Swami Muktananda Paramahansa was about to give an address to a gathering. The daily programme began in the early morning with chanting and meditation, then satsang in the late afternoon and chanting in the evening. For whatever reason, I noticed Bob. I often watched him come in and sit down. His attention was always very focussed and one-pointed as he found his place.

In the spirit of the times, a large number of those attending were young, long-haired and attired in Indian style clothes. Bob however was a proper looking man, upright, strong and roughly my parents' age – mid 40's. He had a woolly beard and sideburns and wore a little pink knitted beanie that looked distinctly at odds with his demeanour. The beanie had a very loose pom-pom that used to *bob* around, and that's how I remembered his name, though it is unclear how I came to know it in the first place. Each time he entered the room and sat down, I would look across to check if the pom-pom was still attached.

Muktananda visited the Adamsons' home in Ivanhoe for a satsang and my husband, Peter, and I were among those who filled the large front room to

capacity. Bob and his wife Barbara continued to hold regular chanting evenings after the Australian tour finished. We next saw Bob at Muktananda's ashram in Ganeshpuri, India, in late 1975. Muktananda was away on an extended stay in America at the time and there were only a handful of westerners there. Jobs were allocated; I cleaned toilets and gardened while Peter worked in another section of the garden with a few of the men.

Peter recounts, "One morning I was assigned to work with Bob in the composting area of the garden, or shit pits as we called them. Bob and I were both turning the piles of rotting vegetable matter and mixing in elephant dung. We had just started for the day and, as Bob stuck his shovel in, a large king cobra slithered out. In India, the cobra is considered auspicious and believed to be a manifestation of Lord Shiva. But as an Australian, Bob instinctively jumped back, lifted his shovel and yelled, 'Shit! A snake!' With one quick strike he cut off its head, and then proceeded to dice it into pieces calling it a 'fucking snake.' People working nearby heard the commotion and came to investigate. The news circulated quickly around the ashram and they were quite dark on him for a while."

After Peter and I departed from Ganeshpuri, we bumped into Bob and fellow ashramite Mark West on a street in Bombay. They'd just come from the jewellers and proudly showed us their large pendants engraved with "*Sadguru Nath Marahaj ki jai.*" At that stage Bob talked about going to see Nisargadatta and invited us along. However, as we had plans to be at

Ramana Maharshi's ashram in Tiruvannamalai for Shivaratri, a religious festival, we declined.

There are all sorts of details about Bob that I recall from those days in the 1970's: the colour and features of the shirt he was wearing in Bombay, his habit of shifting weight from one foot to the other, his gaze which used to constantly move around and rarely settle during conversation, and his habit of turning his head to the side when listening. These days his energy is unwavering and constant, his bearing is steady, his gaze is direct and uninterrupted and he wears hearing devices.

Back in Melbourne in 1974 during Muktananda's visit, the Adamsons had lent their large rug to cover the bare floor of the satsang room. Bob had also contributed a large sum of money to help finance the tour. Perhaps some of that money paid for the advertising that drew Peter and me to the daily programmes and the opportunity to spend much of the day around Muktananda. It seems ironic that the carpet I remember sitting on as a 21 year old, and the carpet I sit on decades later, are both Bob's.

It's also now clear as to why I should remember him so well and in such remarkable detail, especially given that I have no recollection of any conversation with him. In the stillness, the oneness, the eternal, notions of past and present collapse into the emptiness from which they spring. Given this, where could forgetting be?

Introduction

This short biography is woven out of the fragments of memories and reflections patiently offered by Bob and supplemented by his wife Barbara. The gathering, selecting and organising of these recollections attempts to illustrate Bob's *Bobness*, the unique human pattern vibrating and expressing as that particularised form. That *Bobness* is remarkably ordinary, yet profoundly extraordinary. There are some who recognise him, yet for the many, he remains unnoticed. Either way it doesn't matter.

What Bob refers to as *the understanding* is not something that is rare, nor is it the exclusive domain of the spiritual elite. It is the clear seeing that is available to all who care to really look. Bob invites those who come to listen to really *see* and get a taste of their true nature. He is keen to point out that it is not just for the few, it's for everyone. In the *seeing* that he speaks about, the illusory nature of what had been taken as the real simply loses its bind and there is nothing more to do. For those who do truly see, the search ends and there is a profound sense of what can only be described as *wellbeing* – a total freedom from all psychological bondage.

Meetings are held three times a week in the lounge room of the apartment in leafy Deepdene, Melbourne, that he shares with Barbara. They are

informal gatherings, open for all to attend. and run for about ninety minutes. Thrice weekly, an assortment of people arrives to listen, discuss and ask their questions. They sit on the couch, dining chairs, foldaway chairs or on the carpeted floor. There are often visitors from interstate or travellers from overseas who have made the long journey to spend time with him. The sessions usually begin with Bob giving an introduction on non-duality and then what follows is always unique and particular to that session.

Bob uses only a minimal number of concepts in his teaching and refuses any elaboration on them. Non-duality is spoken about as *One without a Second*. The word *second* is included to make it clear that there can be nothing more than the singularity. When someone attempts to add complexity, he immediately undercuts it and returns to the core. The very nature of the mind is to habitually embellish to produce even more. “Why complicate things?” he says. “After all, what can be simpler than one?”

When beliefs that had shored up the notion of being a separate entity begin to falter, glimpses of the oneness break through like sunlight between clouds. It is helpful when a fully awake person points to the fact that you are *That*. The talking that takes place in the room creates a slipstream that has the capacity to awaken that recognition. When asked by a newcomer one evening if he were a sage, Bob seemed bemused as he responded with words from the folk song, “No, I’m parsley, rosemary and thyme.” The whole room cracked up laughing.

A line from the Genjokoan written by the founding Soto Zen master Eihei Dogen explains, “When Buddhas are truly Buddhas, they do not necessarily notice that they are Buddhas. They are actualised Buddhas, who go on actualising Buddhas.” In the world of spiritual teachers, Bob is a rarity, a clear vessel. He has not allowed hierarchy and officialdom to evolve around him, nor a spiritual circus to develop. There is no darshan or blessing, for who could give what and to whom? When the meetings close, his farewell is simply a generous and heartfelt bear hug.

Bob exudes a very big and unwavering energy. His gaze is direct yet soft – a clear space is filled with love. He makes each feel as if they have a special relationship with him. Being tall and standing very upright, he is remarkably active for a man of his age. He can be exceptionally gentle and seems fearless, the kind of person you would want accompanying you if you had to walk down a dark alley at night. Over the years Bob has been accompanying many in their journey through darkness and some of those seemingly dangerous places. Perhaps he remembers those places from his own life.

His manner is usually polite. Bob has a correctness about him and he is uncompromisingly honest and acutely sensitive. He doesn’t miss a thing. A sharp eye for detail and a natural sense of beauty are qualities that possibly formed from his close contact with nature as a child. His keen insights sometimes reveal themselves in a concise and dry wit. His niece Ottalyne recalls that he was always lots of fun because he amused the kids with his jokes.

Sometimes his wry summations serve to undercut any aggrandising which can creep into conversations about spirituality. He simply doesn't see anyone as spiritual, let alone more or less so than anyone else. Neither does he see anyone as *a someone*. He's quick to point out that everyone is *That* whether they know it or not, so what would all the fuss be about?

Bob is very focussed with any undertaking. It seems that this one-pointedness may have sometimes cut against the grain. Being an independently minded person, he has readily explored new ideas, many that were perhaps counter to much of the thinking of his contemporaries and which may have created some isolation from time to time.

Yet Bob is very matter of fact and can sometimes be quite blunt with a brusque, take it or leave it attitude. The qualities of being dogged and remaining one-pointed may have been the very qualities that served him in the process of discovering the truth. He simply wouldn't let the non-understanding rest. In the words of Zen Master Bassui Zenji, "What is obstructing realisation? Nothing but your own half-hearted desire for truth. Think of this and exert yourself to the utmost."

During the meetings, I've seen the occasional rudeness and impoliteness met on his part with compassion and generosity. The same question repeatedly asked by the same person over many months was always patiently met with Bob's genuine interest and fresh response. Yet if a situation arises which demands a forceful response, Bob can fire up and engage in some strong verbal debate.

He does not avoid conflict just for the sake of keeping the peace.

Bob is the last teacher for many and his meetings are truly a finishing school. When a visitor who had travelled from overseas said "My full stop is that you're the last teacher, this is it," Bob responded, "It better be. And cast this one out too."

Bob has fully realised his true nature. As he puts it, "There is nothing to do, nowhere to go and nothing to be." He is an equal with his beloved and final teacher Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj.

Early Life

Bob's family were not religious in any way and had no interest in anything spiritual. Born on the family farm on Saturday 21 July 1928, Bob's early years coincided with the Great Depression. These years were difficult for the family as they had gone through the hardship of severe floods and lost their farm. They had been in the process of selling the property when the government declared that all loans be frozen. The contract of sale had been signed and was legally binding, however settlement had not taken place and subsequently the money owing was never paid to his family.

Bob's father then became the manager of several farms in the Beaconsfield area owned by one of Melbourne's wealthy establishment families. While Bob's family didn't have a great deal, life was uncomplicated and free for the Adamson children. Bob, his two older sisters and younger brother spent much of their time exploring the surrounding bushland. They relied on each other's company and spent much of their time making their own fun and getting up to all sorts of antics. When they misbehaved they were "given a belting", yet Bob recalls his childhood as being good.

Bob's grandparents had settled in Beaconsfield quite early and some of their children remained in the

region and had in turn married and had children. A veritable tribe of Adamson children attended the tiny local school. When he started school, it was a three mile walk for Bob, but as he got a little older, he rode a pony to school and later a horse. Bob pitched in around the farm helping with general duties including sheep dipping and crop harvesting. Once, when he was leading one of the draught horses back from pulling the farm machinery, it stood on his bare foot crushing it badly against the cobblestones. He became very good at riding and won a couple of medals in competitions. His eldest sister Noel said he was a skilful rider and that he could “ride the tail off a pony”.

Bob didn't take easily to classroom learning, which was all the more difficult as he was naturally left-handed but was made to write with his right hand – a usual practice then. He was self-conscious about his handwriting and school learning became increasingly hard for him. Given Bob's sensitive nature, his astute eye for detail and his natural intelligence, there must have been an underlying frustration at not being able to put his interior landscape into words.

When school got out at 3.30 pm, the real learning began. Bob would catch rabbits, net eels, hunt lizards, kill snakes and collect other treasures. His Uncle Arthur was a close friend of the naturalist Charles Barrett. Arthur and Charles frequently went out observing the then abundant bird life of the region and recording data on numerous species including the now endangered Helmeted Honeyeater.

Accompanying his Uncle Arthur, young Bob spent a lot of time in the bush learning about the different birds and their calls. Over time, he gathered a large collection of their eggs. With the senses and intuition allowed free rein, his explorations led to an appreciation of the natural world around him; direct, real, factual and immediate.

At the meetings, when someone says that they understand *intellectually* what he is saying, he is quick to point out that you either understand something or you don't. “Two and two equals four: is that an intellectual understanding or do you know it for a fact?” Bob often draws on examples from the natural world to illustrate some of the points he is talking about. Such stories are filled with a warmth and beauty.

In 1940 when Bob was twelve, he and his family left the Beaconsfield farm and moved to Melbourne. His first job was delivering telegrams within the City of Melbourne. Two years later he left home and headed for the fruit picking camps. They were comprised of itinerant workers, “alcoholics, deadbeats, people on the run and no-hopers living in the huts and camps. There was boozing going on all the time. If you opened your mouth, you'd get a fistful.”

That way of life presented a pretty rough transition to independence for a young adolescent. In order to survive he had to quickly learn to defend and protect himself.

Back in Melbourne in 1943 and at 15 years of age, Bob was taken to a pub one Friday night by two slightly older boys who worked with him. Bob said that he

had three drinks and the world changed for him. Later, when he tried to recapture that euphoric state, he was unable to, because he would always drink past it.

This world of drinking that opened for him at this formative stage of his life would in the following seventeen years become one of darkness and despair and would almost destroy him. The precious years of his young adulthood became a blur and the social skills necessary for life had little opportunity to develop and flourish.

Becoming a Sailor

With the Second World War underway, Bob, like other young men, was eager to sign up for military service. His father Robert, having fought at Gallipoli in the First World War, would not give permission for his son to join up. As one of the last stand of men who held on firing while the remaining group escaped to the Gallipoli mainland, he knew only too well what war entailed. So Bob had to wait until his seventeenth birthday to apply. Four months later, in November 1945, Bob was accepted into the Navy. The war had just ended but Bob was contracted for a full twelve-year term and was immediately sent off to Japan.

Bob began to look the part of a sailor and was tattooed by Rocky Vain, the Flinders Street tattooist. He has two on each arm, one on each leg and across his chest a serpent and eagle embrace in a combative struggle. His parents, grandmothers and a bevy of aunts and uncles were outraged.

The discipline of Navy life got to Bob, especially the abuse, unfairness and injustices meted out on a regular basis. Being “stood over” affected his sense of self-worth and there was a continuous cycle of drunkenness and getting into fights. A pattern of resentment built and he felt that life was against him and bitterly unfair. This belief rubbed raw against the events of daily life. While the alcohol anaesthetised

this temporarily, it compounded the growing problem. There were many alcoholics in the Navy and boozing, abuse and fighting were simply a way of life.

Bob lasted about two and a half years of his term before being discharged. The charge for his expulsion was that he was a chronic alcoholic with anxiety neurosis. He was only nineteen years old and it had been a damaging experience. His hearing was also permanently impaired as a result of gun practice.

Going Shearing

After leaving the Navy, Bob worked on a farm in the Western District of Victoria. He was about twenty-one at the time and, being attracted to the idea of the backcountry of Australia, he travelled to Charleville in outback Queensland to try out at shearing. It took a while to learn to handle the sheep and in the initial stages his arms and back ached at the end of the day. He worked in numerous places in Queensland and would follow the shearing season down through New South Wales, Victoria and across to Tasmania.

“Queensland in January and February would be as hot as buggery especially working on the board under a low tin roof. You’d be sweating and struggling with the big wethers.” At the end of shearing season Bob would often decide not to return to work in such conditions again, but when his money ran out he would contact the publican up there and be sent the fare. The publican knew that the money he lent the shearers would be recouped when they returned to the bar with their pay cheques.

Life as a shearer involved taking as much booze as possible out to the sheep station where it would be consumed within the first couple of days. A lot of shearers were alcoholics and when they arrived at the property they’d lie around in the huts boozing for the first few days before starting the shearing. Bob recalls,

“The contractor would be screaming his head off but we couldn’t do anything about it – we were in the horrors. We used to call it ‘zoo night’ when the booze cut out. You’d start hallucinating all sorts of animals and there’d be a lot of screaming and yelling.”

On Friday nights, exhausted from days of hard work, the shearers would pile into a vehicle and head straight to town. In the pub there would be exaggerated stories about the shearing accomplished in the sheds. Bob recalls that the shearers would “shear more sheep in the pubs than they did in the shed”, while their wages would be spent in no time. There was a lot of hard drinking.

The shearer epitomises an aspect of the Australian national character and today is still iconic in the cultural imagination. These tough-minded blokes were fast on their feet with a self-deprecating humour, a dry wit with a turn of phrase often “too blue for the womenfolk”. With regard to the shearers romantic lives, the saying was that they were always “Too tired, too drunk, too far away”.

Apart from the obvious disadvantages, there was a sense of freedom in being a shearer. “In the shearing sheds you are your own boss. You were in a team with a contractor and back then the industry in Australia was small.” Bob had a hard-earned reputation as being a “gun shearer” – a title earned by a very small number of shearers who are highly skilled, very fast and able to cut very cleanly. With bravado and rivalry rampant, a gun shearer was a highly respected figure in the fiercely competitive environment of the shearing shed.

Regardless of his drinking, he would always be wanted as the best and fastest.

He didn’t get home to Melbourne very much as he was always off shearing somewhere. Yet through the ups and downs and no matter where he was in Australia, he always sent money home to his mother, Mary, who was a widow. His father was in his sixties when he died from complications that developed as a result of injuries sustained in a ploughing accident. Bob was very close to his mother and they loved each other a great deal. However, Bob’s drinking problem, compounded by his increasingly difficult behaviour, led to an estrangement with other members of his family.



Bob (left) with a fellow shearer out on the town in South Australia *circa* 1952



Bob and Barbara on their first date in 1968



Bob (third from left) at the Maharishi's press conference, Melbourne Airport, 1964

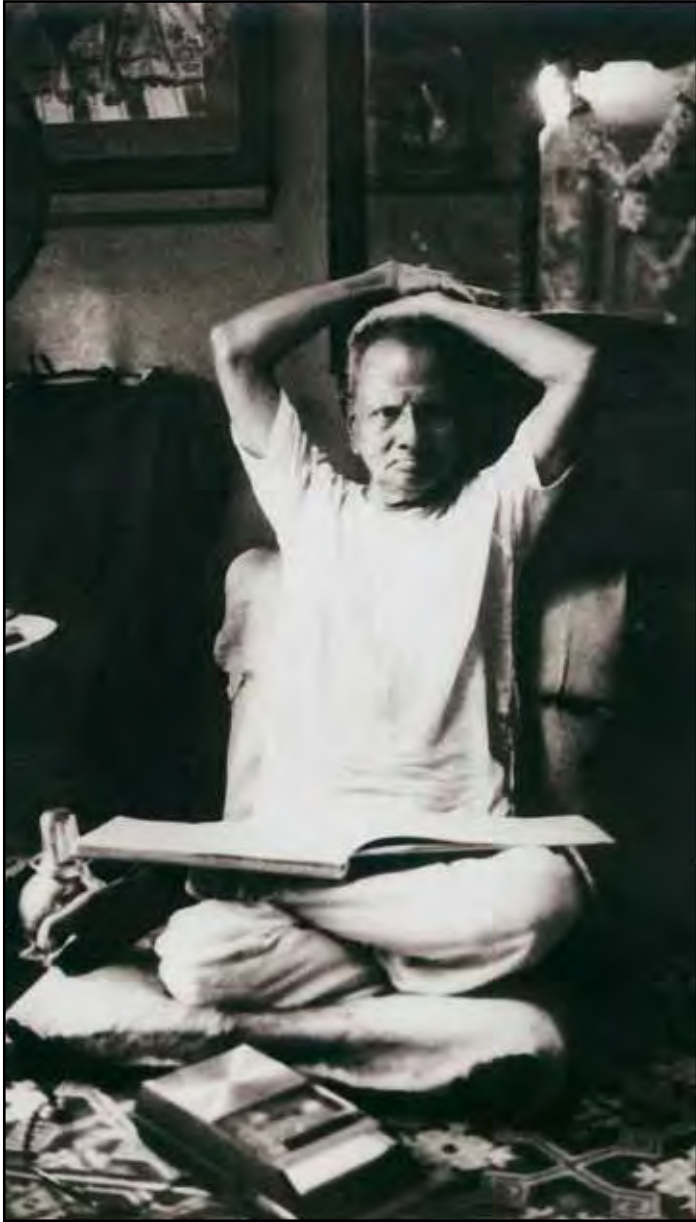
Bob (left) in beanie with stepdaughter Felice (right) listening to Muktananda, Melbourne, 1974



Photo of Nisargadatta taken by Bob, 1978

Bob and Barbara at Melbourne Airport before their return visit to India in 1978





Above: Nisargadatta with his grandson in 1976

Left: Nisargadatta in his loft room, 1976



Above: Bob outside the health food shop in Hamhom, 1985

Top left: Bob with Flicka the deer at Alinta Farm

Bottom left: Bob at Alinta Farm leading Linta the German Shepherd on one of the Shetland ponies





Bob – 1997



Bob and Barbara at her birthday lunch in June 2007

Bob addressing a meeting in Byron Bay, 1997



PART 2



The Teaching

Extracts from Talks, Question and Answer
Sessions and Interviews

Not Just for the Few

Bob: Have you all left your self-centres at the door? It makes it much easier if you do. Most of you in the room have been here before, so you've got a good idea of what it's all about. We say that this understanding is not just for the few, it's everybody's right because it's based on pure simplicity itself – oneness. Although it's been put around that it's very hard to obtain, there is actually nothing simpler than one. This understanding has been handed down through the centuries – far back before any documentation. It had been known only to a few and the reason was that communities were fairly isolated and the means of communication were limited. So there'd only be a few who'd hear about it from someone in a village somewhere.

Not everybody wants to look at this stuff and that does not matter. That's the way they are patterning and the way they're functioning. Yet whether they look at it or not, they are *That*. What you are seeking, you already are. The great word or *Mahavakya* is *I am That*, this is *That*, everything is *That*.

But what is this *That* which they're talking about? It's something that cannot be conceptualised. You can't put a word or a label on it. Over the centuries there have been a lot of good pointers. One of the Buddhist ones is *cognising emptiness*. It is emptiness, no-thing; it's not a vacuum or a void – it's suffused with knowing. In

other words, suffused with intelligence – the activity of knowing. That’s why I sometimes use the concept, “intelligence energy”.

I’m talking about the same intelligence that functions as this universe. If you have a look out there in space, you’ll see the planets moving around, galaxies forming and breaking down, earth orbiting the sun, tides coming in and out, seasons coming and going. For all these things to be happening implies it’s suffused with an innate intelligence.

There are many metaphors for that oneness. They call it space-like awareness, cognising emptiness, pure awareness, consciousness. The Buddhists again in the Dzogchen scriptures say it’s non-conceptual, ever-fresh, self-shining, presence awareness, just this and nothing else. If you look at that closely, that’s a very accurate description of you, right here, right now. Without any concepts, you are seeing and knowing. Can you say the seeing, the knowing, hearing or functioning has any beginning? Can you say it has any ending? Can you point to where you start seeing or where you end seeing, or hearing? So it’s ever-fresh, self-shining, self-knowing. You don’t need another self to try to find yourself. That would be an impossibility. We have created this false sense of self and then we go looking from that point of view to try to find out what we really are. Yet that self-knowing is constantly with us.

And you cannot negate your presence. Nobody can say, *I am not*. Each one of us knows that *I am*. But it’s not that thought, *I am* that we’re talking about, that’s simply the way it’s translating through the mind. That

sense of presence, the awareness of presence, translates through the thought, *I am*. So you’re there before the thought. When you look and investigate you’ll find you’re not the body, nor the mind. The body-mind is just another pattern or appearance in this emptiness, just as the tree, the flower, the cloud and everything else is.

So the intelligence energy that functions as the universe is the activity of knowing. Before we can say, “I know this, or I know that”, there is that naked knowingness, or naked intelligence, or naked awareness, before it’s translated into any concept. And because that I-N-G is on the knowing – it’s not just know, the knower or the known, it’s know-ing. That I-N-G implies that it’s something that’s actively taking place in the immediacy of this moment. We call it a moment, but it’s not even that.

When did you start knowing? Have you finished knowing? It is going on naturally before you start discriminating with the mind and saying *I know this*, or *I don't know that*. You can’t negate the knowing. It’s an activity that’s happening right now. And what is an activity? An activity is a movement of energy? So again, intelligence energy – the activity of knowing.

None of these terms can ever get anywhere near it. That’s why they tell us in the Gita, *the sword can't cut it, the fire can't burn it, the wind can't dry it, the water can't drown it* – purely and simply because it contains all of those things. None of those things could be without it. So how can you grasp it with a concept when it contains all concepts? We can only use terms

such as *That*, or awareness. We are talking about the no-thing, the un-manifest. We call this a phenomenal universe – a universe made up of phenomena. These stars and galaxies are all phenomena. And the definition of phenomena is that which *appears to be*.

Now the opposite of phenomenon is the *noumenon* which means the un-manifest, the emptiness. The dictionary definition of *noumenon* is *That which is*. The un-manifest is the actuality, the *what is*. The phenomenon, the patterning universe, is appearance only. Now when we speak about that appearance, we generally exclude ourselves and say that this is appearing to me, or this is my appearance. Yet what we're expressing as, is the appearance.

The very life essence is the indivisible, pure, intelligence energy. It's just been pointed out that it can't be grasped with a concept, and because it is no-thing, it cannot be negated either. You might have read many books, done many practices, done lots of things and heard about many great masters, but not one of them has ever gone beyond nothing, no-thing. With the awareness of being no-thing, you've gone as far as you can ever go; you're there where you've always been. You are that no-thing that's expressing, that is happening as that human shape and form. The expression is happening just as it is patterning and expressing every other shape and form. In the Gita they say... *from Brahma to a clump of grass*. It's all that. That is what you are.

That is why I say that it's everybody's right, and there are some people here who understand that

already. Let life unfold from the point of view that what you really are is the unmanifest, the pure essence.

The Essence Is the Unmanifest and Has Never Changed

Q: *How do I stay in the awareness? It seems like it comes and goes.*

Bob: If you think you've got it and then lose it, always come back to what the ancients tell us. They say it's one without a second – you are already that. The thought, *I've lost it*, or *I've got it* is the totality also; it's how it's appearing. Everything becomes all inclusive. Initially, when we're looking at this stuff, we pull it all apart and see that there's no entity there with any substance or any independent nature. And when you see that, you don't have to pull it apart anymore. Whether it's seemingly *got* or seemingly *lost*, everything that is happening is *That*.

Q: *And there's no-one who can change that?*

Bob: It changes by itself, it alters of itself. As manifestation, it's certain to change because the whole manifestation is transient and is constantly changing – from the furthestmost galaxy down to the smallest subatomic particle – it's constantly changing in appearance. But the essence of it is the unmanifest and has never changed. Yet it contains all the changes, and the changes can't contain it, and that's what we try

to do when we try to grasp it with a thought. We try to grasp the unchangeable with a changeable thing. The definition of reality is that which never changes.

Q: *I don't know whether I can come to terms with the fact that I don't exist.*

Bob: Nobody says anything about non-existence. You are existence itself. There is only one existence, one presence, one power, one intelligence. Instead of confining yourself to that little pattern you call *me*, which in the scheme of things is nothing, you're trying to work it out in the mind. *Me* can never come to terms with it. As Nisargadatta says, "You're trying to grasp it with a concept – and you fail. And you are bound to fail." He means you'll always fail while you're trying to grasp it with a concept.

But, full stop right now, without a thought, are there any concepts going on? Yet have you stopped seeing? Have you stopped hearing? Have you stopped being aware? In that instant without a concept, without a thought, before another concept arises, you realise that you *are* existence; you are the living-ness, the being-ness. Do you have to come to terms with that? You can only come to terms with it with another concept. It's just as it is – unadorned, naked awareness – not adorned by any concepts. As the poem says, "It's closer than your breathing, nearer than your hands and feet." You've never been away from it. Never could.

Participant: *What a true expression: I cannot come to*

terms with this – because the I is fighting for its survival. That limited identity we think we are is just so invested and it thinks that if it disappears then the whole show will fall to bits. Yet the identity has no reality and, with that understanding and the attention withdrawn, then it simply dissolves. What appears is what's already here, always was and always is.

Bob: Remember that this is the actuality. Nobody can live a moment ago. That's gone. It's finished. You can recall it, but when you're recalling it, the only actuality it's got is what you're giving it in this moment. Nobody can live a moment in the future. You can anticipate and imagine the future, but you can't live the future. If you're not recalling the past, nor imagining or anticipating the future, where does that leave you?

It leaves you here, in this presence awareness, which is clear and empty. It's never been contaminated or hurt by any of the dramas or trials that have gone on in the mind. That living essence has never been touched. It's the one essence. It has never changed its true nature.

Who is Asking the Question?

Q: *I'm just wondering whether you could run through the inquiry?*

Bob: What's the question you're supposed to ask?

Q: *Who am I?*

Bob: Well, have you ever found out, who am I?

Q: *No.*

Bob: Instead of asking, "Who am I?" ask yourself, "Who is asking the question, 'Who am I?'" Who is this questioner who is asking, 'Who am I?'"

Q: *Mm.*

Bob: What do you realise from that?

Q: *I'd say that it is the mind, thought.*

Bob: All right, the mind or thought is the questioner. So the mind or thought is asking, who is the questioner asking the question? The mind or thought is the questioner. Is that right?

Q: *Yes.*

Bob: Well what's the question?

Q: *Who am I?*

Bob: What is that?

Q: *It's a thought.*

Bob: Yes, a concept, a thought. The questioner, which is a thought or a concept, is the question itself, which is a thought or a concept. There is no difference between them. So if there's no questioner, there can't be a question. Where does that leave you – without a question or a questioner?

Q: *So if there's no questioner, there can't be a question?*

Bob: With neither a question nor a questioner, where does that leave you?

Q: *It would be nothing.*

Bob: So you're the bearer of a thought, the bearer of a concept. Cancel out the questioner and the question and there is a naked awareness. You've found out, who am I? Instead of asking the question and mulling it over in your mind for years and years, getting nowhere, see that the questioner is the question itself. People talk about being prior to the mind and do all sorts of antics

trying to get there. The questioner can't be anything other than the question. They both cancel each other out. No question, no questioner. Without a question, or a questioner, I haven't disappeared or fallen apart. That moment you're prior to the mind, and gone beyond thought. So beyond thought, you must be prior to thought. And that's the simplicity of it.

Participant: *That's a nice way of putting it, Bob. You say we're bearers of thoughts and questions, but when those thoughts and concepts and questions disappear, there's no bearer either, and then we are just present. There is just presence awareness, which is prior to all the stuff that's arising, prior to the appearance. Yet the appearance is it.*

Bob: All the pointers will take you home if you look into them.