

Before
I Am



Mooji

*Before
I Am*

The Direct Recognition of Truth

Second Edition

Mooji Media Publications

BEFORE I AM

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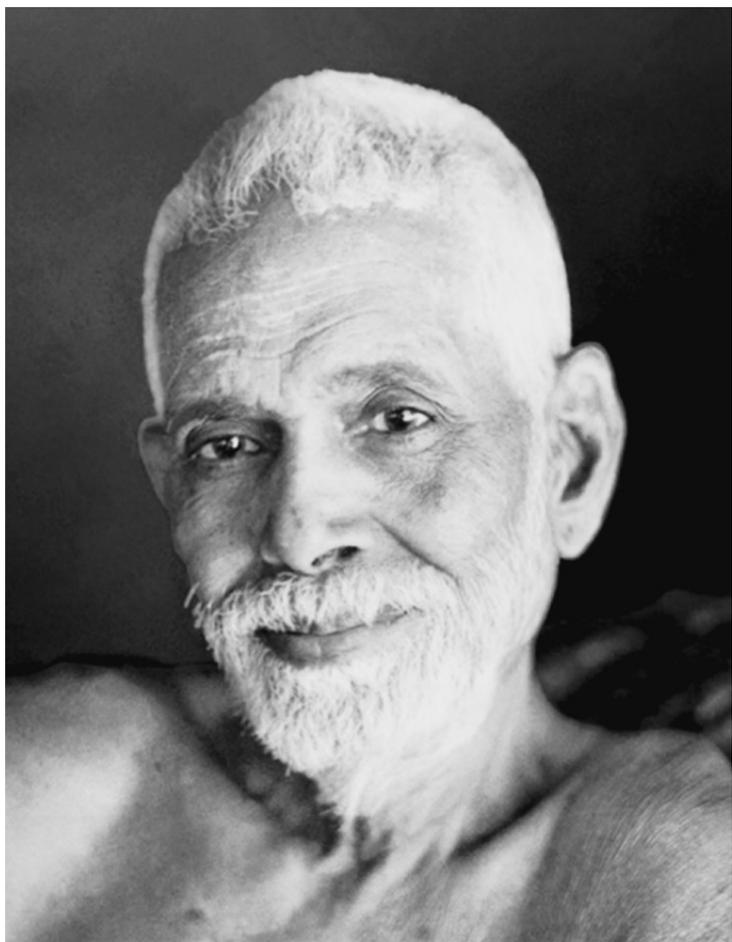
“God illumines
the mind
and shines within it.

One cannot know God
by means of the mind.

One can but turn
the mind inwards
and merge in God.”

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

The Sage of Arunachala
Guru of Sri Poonja



Sri Harilal Poonja
Beloved 'Papaji'

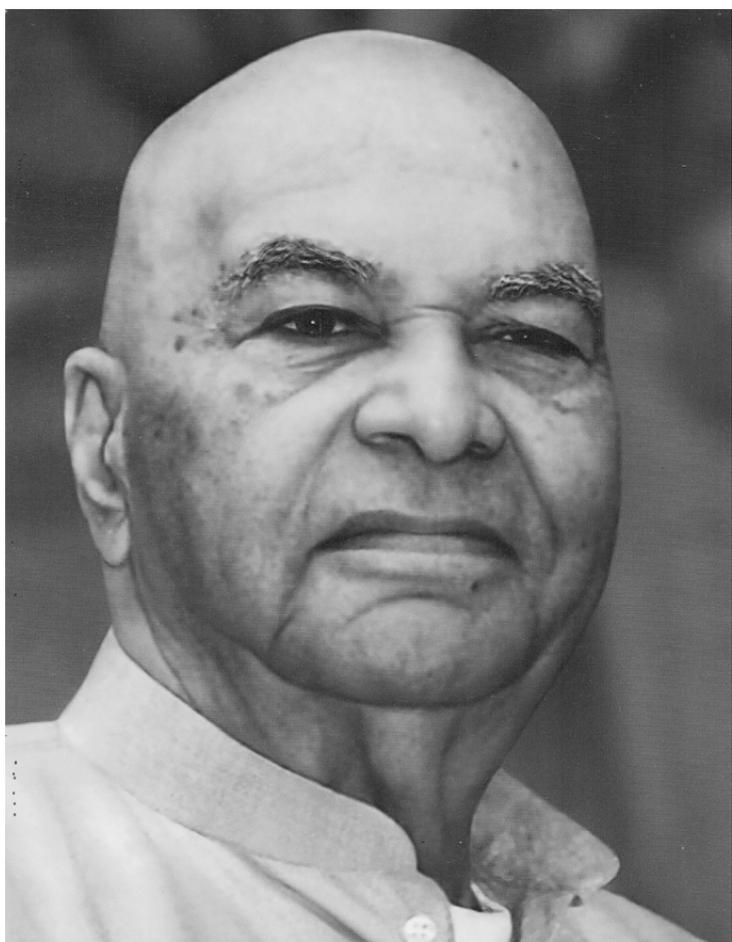
Prostrations
at the feet of my Master,
the embodiment
of grace, wisdom and love;
the light of whose presence
dispels all doubts and delusion,
thus establishing the mind
in its original state
—unborn awareness.

Mooji



“If you want to really love,
love the Supreme Self right now,
love the ultimate Truth.
This love is Freedom.”

Papaji



Seekers are always
saying, "you need a
living Master."

But actually, The
Master is the only
one Alive!



Foreword

Before I Am is a selection of dialogues between Mooji, a warm-hearted spiritual master of the Advaita tradition, and seekers of peace, truth and freedom. At times humorous, at times tender, occasionally sharp and always loving, Mooji responds to questioners as they speak of fear, suffering, confusion, relationships, spiritual practice and how to live their lives in peace. His words represent unwavering invitations to investigate the nature of the self, and to rest effortlessly as the fullness and emptiness of beingness itself. His answers encourage, challenge and never fail to illuminate. Deeply touched by Mooji, people naturally wanted to carry his words home. And so, from live recordings *Before I Am* was lovingly put together by the sangha in a very short space of time. The book has always enjoyed great popularity. Four years on, we offer this refined and expanded edition of *Before I Am*.

Many of the original dialogues were found to benefit from further editing. Compared to sitting with Mooji in satsang, a printed text is more one-dimensional in expression, as intonation and body language are lost. Taking this into account, we have done our best to preserve the potency and clarity of the words as originally uttered by the master without compromising its essence or losing his voice.

While editing some chapters, original transcripts needed to be reviewed. In doing so, further material from the same time period came to light. Our aim with including these unpublished dialogues is to give the book more substance and to make these important satsangs available.

This second edition of *Before I Am* is also further enriched by Mooji's most recent dialogues and spontaneous talks. A selection of fresh quotes was included for added depth and an opportunity for further contemplation. These, combined with some of Mooji's spontaneous brush drawings, make this book a treasure.

Even more potent than the first, this edition acts like an unsparing sword, which chops the mind and leaves you fully naked as your Self.

The Editors

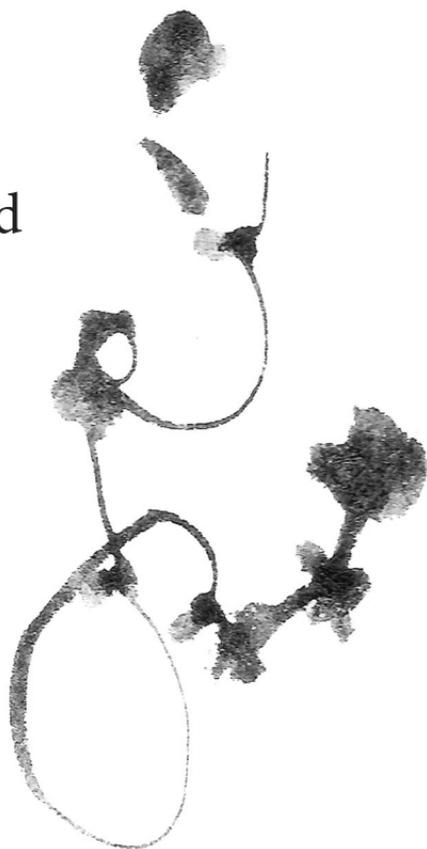
A postscript on variations in spelling of certain concepts: You may be used to seeing concepts that refer directly to the ultimate truth beyond the experiential and physical realm capitalised. While we have still made use of this tool, we have favoured the lower-case spelling throughout the book. This was done especially in passages where the text invites contemplation. We felt that capitalising words would too easily accommodate the tendency to go with the mind's understanding, rather than following through with the introspection that Mooji is calling for. As a result we have used capitalisation sparingly. Most often, we have capitalised terms only when Mooji makes direct affirmations of the timeless truth. Any perceived inconsistency in our approach should not trouble you, because no such differentiation is possible when Mooji speaks and still the same benefit is reaped.

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This is not
a book to please
your mind.
It is a book to
dethrone
your mind and
set your
Heart free.



The Second Thorn

In India, there is a saying: “If a thorn goes into your foot, you might use a second thorn to remove the first thorn. And then you throw both thorns away.”

Before I Am is effectively a second thorn. Its purpose is to remove the thorns of conditioning and habit which are picked up in the forest of existence, and which appear to hinder or make painful what could be a joy-filled dance. The intention behind this collection of dialogues is to point to the essential truth of who and what we are: the unchanging, pristine awareness in which the play of the manifest world appears. Mooji’s concepts are offered to neutralise our concepts from which we derive much personal identity. In keeping with the master’s guidance to not make any tattoos out of his utterances, the words you glean from these pages can also leave your being once their job is done. Their aim is not to take on a cluster of sacred concepts as it were, but rather to truly assimilate what Mooji points us towards; when we do, we are finished, we have returned to where we have always been.

Read these pages as systematically, sporadically, or spontaneously as suits your mood in the moment. Each, any and every page may speak to you because truth requires no method, cannot be categorised and is not chronological. Anywhere you open this book and meet these words, these words will meet you.

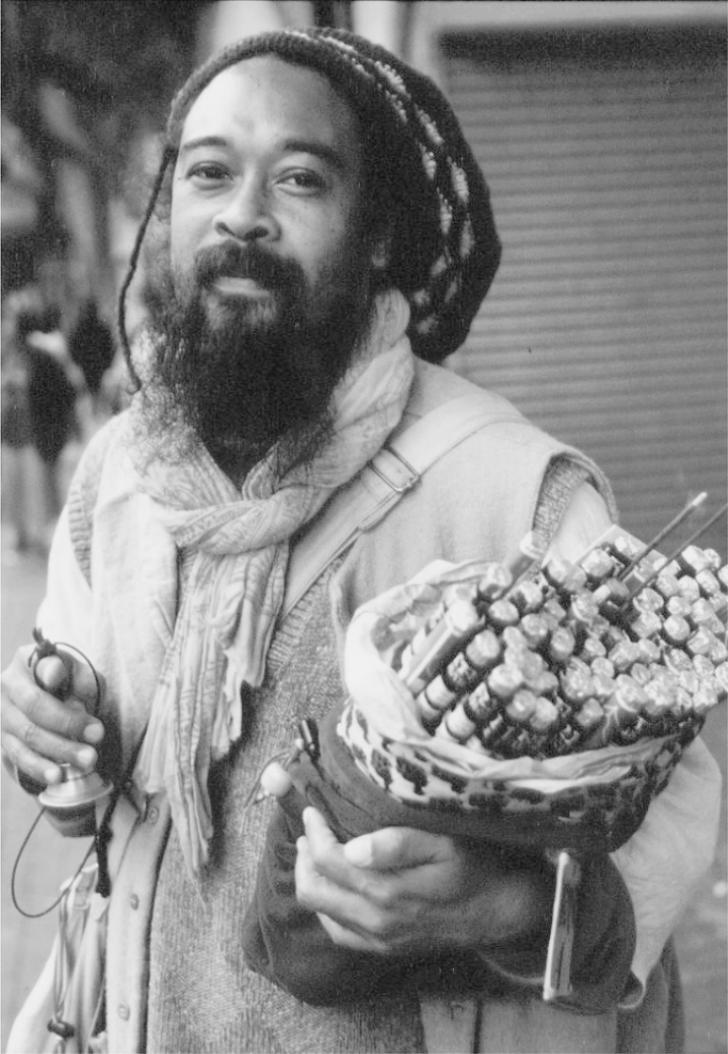
Any moment is a moment for stepping into the fire of self-discovery. This fire will not burn you, it will only burn what

you are not. When you are touched by grace—and do not doubt it, grace is already operating right here by even placing this book in your hands—surrender to it. Don't try to understand or solve the mystery; be willing instead to be dissolved into the mystery itself.

You are being introduced to you without you, through the medium of these words—Self recognising Self through the mirror of inquiry.

To change the world
is not your mission.
To change yourself
is not your duty.
To awaken to your true nature
is your opportunity.





A First Encounter with Mooji

I first met Mooji in Brixton Market, London, in February 1999. At that time he was selling incense in the market and I was working at the French Embassy. Shortly afterwards, we met in his small flat for tea and had our first conversation. We ended up talking all through the night. Time vanished! I was amazed. As the talk deepened, I couldn't believe what I was hearing and what I had in front of me. I had discovered someone of the like of Socrates or an Indian sage of yore under the guise of a friendly and unassuming form. The deepest wisdom was pouring from his lips as I eagerly expressed all the questions which had been burning inside me for years, and I was finding at last living, direct—and baffling!—responses to them. These were not merely intellectual answers but rather a direct and authoritative pointing towards something which is altogether beyond the realm of understanding. For years, I'd been reading philosophical and spiritual books, but now I was face-to-face with the living embodiment of the truth I'd been reading about, right in front of me. Right away, Mooji made clear to me my own deep nature: this awareness, this emptiness, which nothing can improve or impair.

Since then, I have had many occasions to witness his wisdom in action, wonderfully suited to the minds of those

who come to him, a wisdom which springs smoothly from the uninterrupted source of living experience. It springs from, and is felt as, love—tremendous, genuine and pure.

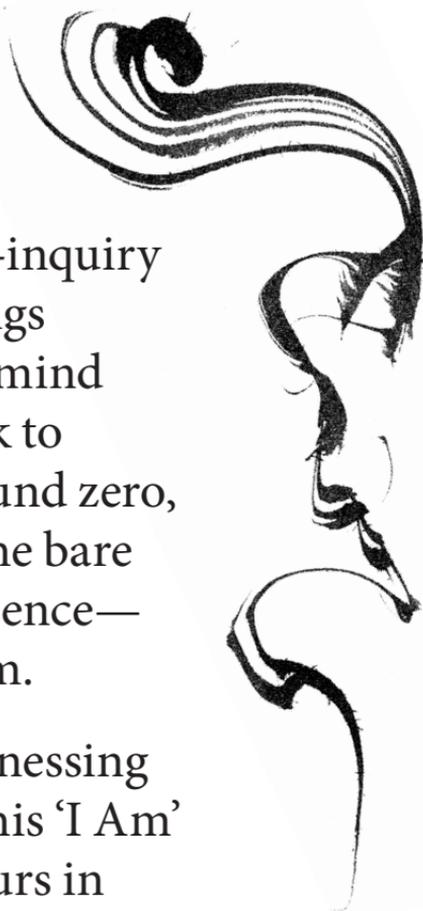
Nataraj (Noé J. Peyre)



For a moment,
don't fix anything
I'm saying here.
Don't make tattoos
out of any utterance.
Just stay
open, quiet and present,
and the unfolding
work of Grace
will be recognised and felt,
within and without,
as harmony and love
in service to Itself.

Self-inquiry
brings
the mind
back to
ground zero,
to the bare
presence—
I Am.

Witnessing
of this 'I Am'
occurs in
the Absolute.



Recognising the Self



Mooji, could you explain self-inquiry? How do I actually begin?

Begin like this: I am, I exist. This is the most natural recognition and knowledge. The sense of existence is spontaneously felt in you as 'I am'. No one taught this to you. Be aware of this simple intuition, without associating it with other thoughts. Feel how it is to be simply present in this instant, without holding onto any intention. Don't touch any thought of doing something special. Keep inwardly quiet. If suddenly a wave of thoughts should come, don't panic. There is no need to control or suppress them. Simply let them play without your involvement. Observe with detachment. Remain empty of intention. Keep quiet.

Imagine you are standing on a platform at the railway station. One by one the trains come—they stop, doors open, doors close, they move on. You don't have to get on. Like this, simply observe the thought activity appearing on the screen of consciousness without connecting up. Don't log on. Thoughts and sensations will be seen to move on by themselves, without being forced. Stay neutral. Be with the awareness as awareness itself. Feel the breath moving effortlessly, without will or strain. Observe the senses functioning, the sense of outer and inner; any movement is just happening by itself, unplanned and unforced.

Whatever arises as thought, feeling, movement or sensation is quietly observed, only now there is less interest, less pull. All is arising; your self is not aroused. All this is smoothly observed. Even the sense of self, the feeling 'I am', is appearing inside the awareness. Make no greater effort than is required. You are here. That which is neither doing nor undoing, neither directing activity nor being affected by activity, which is effortlessly aware yet unconcerned, *that* is your real self. Not behind nor in front, nor above nor beneath, for it is not another phenomenon. It is unplaced, unborn, boundless awareness-self.

Now, observe the observer: 'Who am I?' Check inwardly but remain quiet with alert attention. Don't collect any answer or clues; an answer would and could only be an opinion, an idea or another concept. Don't tie yourself to any concept. Turn the attention away from objects towards the viewing subject. What and where is the seer? Remain silent and neutral. There should now be an increased strength of focus in the looking.

Now, again, watch the sense 'I am'. What is 'I'? From where does it arise? Watch. What do you find?

It cannot be found. It does not exist!

It cannot be found objectively. Nevertheless, the 'I' sense or intuition continues to be present. It is the non-finding of 'I', phenomenally, that proves its non-objective existence.

'I' or 'I am' is found to be without form, an intuition arising from, in, and as emptiness. Without focused inquiry, 'I' appears to be an entity comprised of body and conditioned mind. When searched for as a form, it is found to be merely

a thought; the form of 'I' is thought. Formless, it arises from emptiness as the intuitive sense of subjective presence.

Now that 'I' is found to be formless presence, what recognises this? Does this possess form?

Inquire like this.

Thank you, Mooji.

You are most welcome.



Mooji, I am unable to concentrate on the inquiry, I lose focus easily.

Yes, you would rather walk to the moon than inquire into yourself!

My problem is...

Your problem is not the problem. We love our problems and cannot bear to be without them. They are our illegitimate children, demanding so much attention and we readily give it to them. Perhaps we feel bored without them. Who are you without your problems?

Mind makes all this fuss. You are neither the mind nor its activities.

How do I stop mind?

Don't stop mind, leave it be. Ignore it and remain as Self.

It won't allow me.

Listen to this: A man has been taking driving lessons and can now tackle the main road. One morning, he is driving on the highway alongside his instructor and it begins to rain.

The instructor advises the man to switch on the wind-screen wipers, but as soon as the wipers start moving, the driver's attention begins to follow them and the car is now swerving from side to side along the road. Other drivers begin tooting their horns thinking the driver is drunk!

"Can we turn the wipers off? They are distracting me," asked the learner.

"Keep your eyes on the road alone and the wipers will not distract you," the instructor advises.

"I think I need to at least go to the slow lane," requested the driver.

"No," says the instructor firmly. "Only focus on the road."

"I can't!" says the man frustrated. "My eyes go involuntarily with their movement. Could we switch them off?"

"No. You must learn to drive with them on," the instructor points out. "Focus only on the road."

"But it's too dangerous! I can't keep the car straight!" says the man.

"No. Stay focused on the road only, ignore the wipers."

"But it's too dangerous! I will crash!" the man exclaims.

Other drivers are now shouting and swearing at the man, "Get off the road, you drunk!"

The rain is now torrential, and the instructor pushes the wipers up to full speed.

“Simply focus on the road alone. Relax.”

The driver, although very anxious, trusts the instructor’s calm voice. Gradually, the car straightens up as the driver is somehow able to hold his attention on the road despite the wipers swishing at full speed. The driver relaxes; now there is no distraction caused by the moving wipers.

It is the same here with you. *Focus on the road* means to stay focused as the neutral observer rather than focusing on your thoughts, surrounding conditions or apparent problems. Remain as the observer. Don’t follow the mind flow. You are not this mind flow. Keep the attention inside the awareness.

What a beautiful example!

The driver did not learn to focus by adopting a technique, by chanting mantras or by practicing yoga and meditation.

He simply trusted his teacher’s advice, applied it, and focus simply happened. Initially, trust, effort and grace are all required for the attention to remain merged in the Self.

Now you carry on by doing the same.

Whatever direction you take,
the needle of the compass
always points to the north.
So it should be with you.
Whatever you do
or wherever you go,
let your mind remain
inside your Heart.

