

*Most of us live our lives in a continuous movement toward happiness
and away from pain.*

*We come to believe that what we have is never enough,
and that the next experience, the next insight,
the next version of ourselves
will finally bring the peace we are seeking.*

*Yet this constant reaching quietly sustains
the very sense of lack we are trying to escape.*

*As long as happiness is seen as something that must be found
outside of what is already here,
lasting peace remains just out of reach.*

*The invitation in these pages is not to become
someone better, calmer, or more awakened.*

*It is simply to notice what is already quietly present
beneath all striving.*

This offering is not an explanation, a method, or a practice.

*It is an invitation to pause
and notice what is already here.*

*Read slowly.
Stop when you feel the pull to stop.*

Nothing more is required.

PROLOGUE

Although dwelling on the past has nothing to do with the message in this book, a little history may explain how it came about and put it into context. However, please remember that enlightenment is not an experience. Whatever experiences we may come across in our spiritual journey, we are not any of those experiences, but rather the one who is witnessing them, the pure awareness cognizing them without thought.

The experience may be of bliss, of silence, even of nothingness, but it is not what we are. We are the experiencing of it.

We must leave all experiences behind, and keep going to the point where every object goes — silence, bliss, nothingness, until there is nothing left but our own subjectivity. Then, no bliss is more blissful, no silence deeper, no nothingness truer.

DEEPER THAN BLISS

It was the last day of a meditation retreat, and for a few days I had been unable to sleep as a familiar wave of energy ran up and down my body. It felt as if I was plugged into an immense source of energy. Even though I was functioning on very little sleep, I awakened that morning feeling good.

The bell rang, announcing the first meditation session of the day. I sat on a chair at the back of the meditation room and took a deep breath in and out. I let myself relax into the cushion, while being careful to maintain an alert presence. Over the previous few months I had been working at maintaining a balance between relaxation and 360-degree openness all around, while at the same time being alertly aware. Too much relaxation and I would fall asleep; too much alertness and I would become agitated.

After a few minutes into the session, a huge rush of energy began rising within the centre of my body. The feeling was so incredibly powerful that it frightened me.

My gut reaction was to open my eyes and look toward the meditation teacher. I could distinguish her facial features, but I had to focus hard to keep her face from floating away. I took a deep breath and closed my eyes again, trying to settle with the energy that was now shaking my body. Then a thought floated by in consciousness: “What is perceiving this?”

With my eyes still closed, I sensed a movement arising from a vast bottomless chasm. As I began to focus my attention on it, it appeared as though I was looking into a reflective surface.

A shiver of terror went down my spine as I realized that what I was seeing was actually myself moving. Not the self I was familiar with, but something so endlessly vast, totally unexpected, infinitely unimaginable and so utterly terrifying that my mind gave up. I disappeared into a nothingness with no-thing in it. No forms, no sounds, no thoughts and no self – just absolute nothingness.

The next thing I was aware of was the bell signalling the end of the sitting meditation and the beginning of the walking meditation. I found it difficult to comprehend anything. I couldn't remember my name or who I was. I got up and went outside.

The world appeared different. The trees shimmered vibrantly in iridescent hues. Everything was extremely clear and had a sense of immediacy. Every little thing was alive and present. At this point I laughed, overtaken by joy.

My joy turned to awe as I began to sense a breathtaking presence. It was incredibly vast, bright and alive, yet also personal, intimate and intense, radiating pure love everywhere. It was harmonious. It was infinite. It was unimaginable. It was perfect.

Another meditator approached and asked me about a salad she was preparing. Without any effort, the answer rolled off my tongue. To my surprise, she didn't notice anything different about me. To her, I still appeared to be a normal and coherent woman, even though I still could not recall my own name. I found this so funny that I had to keep myself from laughing out aloud. I didn't feel ready to give a reason for my sudden bout of laughter because I was not sure she would understand.

Gradually the experience subsided and by nightfall, I was back to normal reality again, back in name and identification. In my bed that night, I reflected on my experience. While I felt indescribable gratitude for it, I sensed that the experience I'd just had was not complete. If it had ended, it could not have been the "real thing". I knew that there was still something that I wasn't fully seeing.

Since I was a child I'd had many spiritual experiences like this, and they all had a beginning, middle and an end. They were always about "me" having "my" experience. I intuitively knew that what I was looking for was not only before and beyond time and space, but also before and beyond any ideas of self.

EFFORTLESS FRUIT

The next day I woke up feeling very sick, and lay in bed for a month, too weak to move. Then, as suddenly as it had come, the sickness left and I decided to go out for a bit of fresh air.

I was walking down the street when suddenly I realized I was not existing in the individual shell that had once encased my personality so tightly. The person I'd once thought of as me, rigidly held together and kept separate from other individual existences, had melted into something indescribable, an infinite space containing everything and giving rise to everything.

I was that space, I was everything in it, and I was the awareness of it, yet the space and what appeared within the space were not "two". Since there was no line to distinguish between "my" awareness and the images I saw, I realized that this experience was not happening to a personal self. Both appearances were simply in and of awareness and whatever perceived this was awareness itself.

Everything appeared very normal, very ordinary, and yet something was different. I was not having thoughts; I was what contained the thoughts. The same was true for all appearances including emotions, states, sensations and experiences. Everything was appearing and disappearing

within the space that I am. There were no boundaries or borders.

I was everywhere and everything – the mid-afternoon sky, the sound of my boots hitting the footpath and the chewing gum sticking to them.

I was every blade of grass, every bird that flew across the sky and the rubbish bin waiting to be collected.

I was also the body–mind called Enza, all of it; body, sensations, feelings and thoughts were still experienced, but only within this wholeness, as an aspect of this wholeness.

And I saw that this awareness had always been here, I had always been *this*. This “me” included not only infinite space but also everything in the past, everything in the future and all of time. Amazingly I had never noticed it before, because by searching for it outside myself, I had continuously overlooked it.

WHY TALK OF ANYTHING ELSE?

At first I avoided speaking about this to anyone, having decided that I was not going to share my “experience”. At the time it seemed better to keep quiet, partly because I believed I would not be able to fully communicate it and partly because the history of the entity I had believed to be me was one of not wanting to do anything that made her

overly visible. If I were to start talking about this, it was bound to happen that others would project their notions onto me. I knew that I may be met with scepticism and that some would question my intentions. But slowly, as the stronghold on this mind-generated identity started to loosen its grip, I became more willing to do whatever life wanted of me, including the writing of this book if it could help others to recognize their true nature as that which is always and already, completely and naturally *free*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ENZA VITA is the publisher and editor of *InnerSelf* newspaper and *Woman Spirit* magazine, and the founder and director of the *MahaShanti Foundation*, a non-profit organization dedicated to the spiritual awakening of all beings.

She has spent over 40 years of her life searching and studying under many of the great spiritual teachers of our age, and has been exposed to the wonderful writings of many others around the world.

As a result she was able to discover the universal teaching underlying all of them and to distil and present a practical guide to awakening, also called enlightenment or self-realization.

Based on Enza's own experience, *Instant Presence* demystifies ancient spiritual teachings and practices from East and West and reveals that spiritual enlightenment is

not a faraway dream, but the ever-present reality always available here and now.

“The truth I talk about is not limited to any tradition,” says Enza Vita, “but is found in, and open to, all true traditions”.

For more information, please visit: www.enzavita.com