

= Adi Da =

Adi Da Samraj , born Franklin Albert Jones ( November 3 , 1939 ? November 27 , 2008 ) , was an American spiritual teacher , writer and artist . He was the founder of a new religious movement known as Adidam . He changed his name numerous times throughout his life ; these names included Bubba Free John , Da Free John , Da Love @-@ Ananda , Da Kalki , Da Avadhoota and Da Avabhasa , among others . From 1991 until his death , he was known as Adi Da Love @-@ Ananda Samraj or Adi Da .

Adi Da initially became known in the spiritual counterculture of the 1970s for his books and public talks , and for the activities of his religious community . His philosophy was essentially similar to many eastern religions which see spiritual enlightenment as the ultimate priority of human life . Distinguishing his from other religious traditions , Adi Da declared that he was a uniquely historic avatar ( incarnation of a god or divinity in human form ) . As such , Adi Da stated that henceforth devotional worship of him would be the sole means of spiritual enlightenment for anyone else .

Adi Da wrote many books about his spiritual philosophy and related matters , founding a publishing house to print them . He gained praise from authorities in spirituality and philosophy , but was also criticized for what were perceived as his isolation , controversial behavior , claims toward exclusive realization , and cult @-@ like community .

In the mid @-@ 1980s , allegations by former followers of false imprisonment , brainwashing , sexual abuse , assault and involuntary servitude received international media attention . These allegations resulted in lawsuits or threatened suits on both sides

= = Biography = =

= = = Youth ( 1939 ? 70 ) = = =

Adi Da was born Franklin Albert Jones on November 3 , 1939 , in Queens , New York and raised on Long Island . His father was a salesman and his mother a housewife . A sister , Joanne , was born when he was eight years old . He served as an acolyte in the Lutheran church during his adolescence and aspired to be a minister , though after leaving for college in the autumn of 1957 he expressed doubts about the religion to his Lutheran pastor . He graduated in 1961 with a bachelor 's degree in philosophy from Columbia University and went on to complete a master 's degree in English literature at Stanford University in 1963 .

After graduating from Columbia , Adi Da began using a variety of hallucinogenic and other drugs , sometimes heavily . In 1963 , after finishing at Stanford , for 6 weeks he was a paid test subject in drug trials of mescaline , LSD , and psilocybin that were conducted at a Veterans Administration hospital in California . He wrote later that he found these experiences " self @-@ validating " in that they mimicked ecstatic states of consciousness from his childhood , but problematic as they often resulted in paranoia , anxiety , or disassociation . For over a year , Adi Da lived with his girlfriend Nina Davis in the hills of Palo Alto . While she worked to support them , he wrote , took drugs , meditated informally , and studied books on hermeticism in order to make sense of his experiences .

Responding to an intuitive impulse , they left California in June 1964 in search of a spiritual teacher in New York City . Settling in Greenwich Village , Adi Da became a student of Albert Rudolph , also known as " Rudi " , an oriental art dealer and self @-@ styled spiritual guru . Having studied a number of spiritual traditions , including " The Work " of G.I. Gurdjieff and Subud , Rudolph was then a follower of Siddha Yoga founder Swami Muktananda , who gave Rudi the name " Swami Rudrananda " . Rudi taught an eclectic blend of techniques he called " kundalini yoga " ( having no literal relationship to the Indian tradition by that name . )

Adi Da 's father told Rudi of his son 's onetime aspiration to become a Lutheran minister . Feeling that he needed better grounding , in 1965 Rudi insisted that he marry Nina , find steady employment , lose weight , end his drug use , and begin preparatory studies to enter the seminary . As a student

at Philadelphia 's Lutheran Theological Seminary in 1967 , Adi Da described undergoing a terrifying breakdown . Taken to a hospital emergency room , a psychiatrist diagnosed it as an anxiety attack . It was the first in a series of such episodes he would experience throughout his life , each followed by what he explained to be profound awakenings or insights . Feeling none of his Lutheran professors understood this experience , Adi Da left and briefly attended St. Vladimir 's Russian Orthodox Seminary in Tuckahoe , New York . Disillusioned , he moved back to New York City and got a job working for Pan American Airlines , in hopes this would facilitate his being able to visit Swami Muktananda 's ashram in India . He did so for four days in April 1968 . Swami Muktananda encouraged Adi Da to end his studies with Rudi and study with himself directly .

Back in New York , Adi Da and wife Nina became members and then employees of the Church of Scientology . Following Scientology protocol , he wrote Rudi a letter severing all contact . After a little more than a year of involvement , Adi Da left Scientology . He then returned to India for a month @-@ long visit in early 1969 , during which Swami Muktananda authorized him to initiate others into Siddha Yoga .

In May 1970 , Adi Da , Nina , and a friend from Scientology named Pat Morley gave away their belongings and traveled to India for what they believed would be an indefinite period living at Swami Muktananda 's ashram . However , Adi Da was disappointed by his experience there , especially by the numbers of other Americans who had arrived since his previous visit . Three weeks after arriving , Adi Da said that visions of the Virgin Mary ( that he interpreted as a personification of divine feminine power , or shakti ) directed him to make a pilgrimage to Christian holy sites . After two weeks in Europe and the middle east , all three returned to New York before moving to Los Angeles in August .

= = = Becoming a guru ( 1970 ? 73 ) = = =

In September 1970 , Adi Da said that while sitting in the Vedanta Society Temple in Hollywood , he permanently realized " The Bright " , his term for a state of complete spiritual enlightenment . He wrote an autobiography titled The Knee of Listening , which was published in 1972 . In it , Adi Da wrote that he had uniquely been born with full awareness of " the Bright , " but this knowledge became obscured in childhood . His subsequent spiritual journey was a quest to recapture this awareness , and share it with others .

In October 1970 , Swami Muktananda stopped in California on a worldwide tour largely underwritten by Rudi . Adi Da visited him and related his experience the previous month of " The Bright . " Adi Da felt that the swami did not understand or properly acknowledge the full importance of his experience . During the visit Adi Da reconciled with Rudi .

With fellow former Scientology employee Sal Lucania as financier , Adi Da opened Ashram Books ( later Dawn Horse Books ) , a spirituality bookshop in Los Angeles . He began giving lectures there based on his autobiography , soon attracting a small following due in part to his charismatic speaking style . He taught in a traditional Indian style , lecturing from a raised dais surrounded by flowers and oriental carpets , with listeners seated on the floor . He incorporated many ideas from the Kashmir Shaivite and Advaita Vedanta schools of Hinduism , but also expressed original insights and opinions about both spirituality and secular culture . He was one of the first westerners to become well known as a teacher of meditation and eastern esoteric traditions at a time when these were of growing interest . Some early participants stated that Adi Da demonstrated an ability to produce alterations in their consciousness , likening the effect to shaktipat of Indian yoga traditions .

With an increasing number of followers , Adi Da founded a new religious movement called " The Dawn Horse Communion " . In 1973 , he traveled to India to meet a final time with Swami Muktananda in hopes of being recognized as a " Mahasiddha " , or fully enlightened sage . They disagreed on a series of questions Adi Da had prepared . This effectively ended their relationship , and they went on to later disparage each other 's relative level of spiritual accomplishment . Adi Da nevertheless stated that he continued to appreciate and respect Muktananda as his onetime teacher .

Upon returning to Los Angeles , Adi Da ( then Franklin Jones ) directed his students that he should

now be addressed as " Bubba Free John , " based on a nickname meaning " friend " combined with a rendering of " Franklin Jones " . He divorced Nina , although she remained a follower . In January 1974 , Adi Da told his followers that he was " the divine lord in human form " . Later that year , the church obtained an aging hot springs resort in Lake County , California , renaming it " Persimmon " ( it is now known as " The Mountain of Attention " ) . Adi Da and a group of selected followers moved there and experimented in communal living . Most followers relocated from Los Angeles to San Francisco , where Dawn Horse Books also moved .

Adi Da often changed his name , saying it reflected differences or changes in the nature of his message and relationship to followers . In 1979 , he changed his name from " Bubba Free John " to " Da Free John " . Subsequent names included Da Love @-@ Ananda , Dau Loloma , Da Kalki , Hridaya @-@ Samartha Sat @-@ Guru Da , Santosha Da , Da Avadhoota , Da Avabhasa , and from 1994 , Adi Da Love @-@ Ananda Samraj , or Adi Da . Adi Da translated the Sanskrit syllable Da as " giver . "

= = = " Crazy Wisdom " ( 1973 ? 84 ) = = =

In 1973 , Adi Da began to use more unconventional means of instruction he called " crazy wisdom " , likening his methods to a tradition of yogic adepts who employed seemingly un @-@ spiritual methods to awaken observer 's consciousness . Some followers reported having profound metaphysical experiences in Adi Da 's presence , attributing these phenomena to his spiritual power . Others present remained skeptical , witnessing nothing supernatural .

Adi Da initiated a period of teachings and activities that came to be known as the " Garbage and the Goddess " . He directed his followers in " sexual theater " , a form of psychodrama that often involved public and group sex , the making of pornographic movies , and other intensified sexual practices . Drug and alcohol use were often encouraged , and earlier proscriptions against meat and " junk food " were no longer adhered to .

Adi Da said that this behavior was part of a radical overturning of all conventional moral values and social contracts in order to help shock students into insights regarding habitual patterns and emotional attachments so that they could more completely surrender to him and the community . Conventional marriage received Adi Da 's particular criticism , and many couples were forced to split up or switch partners . Adi Da himself had nine or more polygamous partners during this time that he called his " wives " , including Playboy centerfold Julie Anderson , aka " Whitney Kaine " who had entered the community as a follower 's girlfriend . He likewise recommended polygamy or polyamory to some followers .

Adi Da published his fourth book , titled " Garbage and the Goddess : The Last Miracles and Final Spiritual Instructions of Bubba Free John . " It documented the relatively unexpurgated lectures and activities of this period . It quickly sold out its first print run , and a second was sent to bookstores . However , due to the controversial nature of its contents , all available copies were quickly retrieved and ritually burned at Adi Da 's behest .

In 1983 , Adi Da moved with a group of about 40 followers to the Fijian island of Naitaba , purchased by a wealthy follower from the actor Raymond Burr . It was his primary residence until the end of his life .

= = = Public controversy ( 1985 ? 86 ) = = =

Accusations of Adi Da abusing his power as a spiritual leader attracted international attention in 1985 . Adi Da and Adidam ( then known as Da Free John and The Johannine Daist Communion ) were subjects of almost daily coverage in the San Francisco Chronicle , San Francisco Examiner , Mill Valley Record , other newspapers , and regional television news and talk shows over several weeks early in the year . The story gained national attention with a two @-@ part exposé on The Today Show that aired May 9 and 10 .

In investigative reports and dozens of interviews , both named and anonymous ex @-@ members made numerous specific allegations of Adi Da forcing members to engage in psychologically ,

sexually , and physically abusive and humiliating behavior , as well as accusing the church of committing tax fraud . Others stated that they never witnessed or were involved in any such activities .

Adi Da and his organization were sued by Beverly O 'Mahoney , then wife of the Adidam president , for fraud , intentional infliction of emotional distress , false imprisonment , and assault and battery ( among other things ) ; the suit sought \$ 5 million in damages . To a local reporter , Adidam threatened to file its own lawsuit against O 'Mahoney , as well as five others who had been named in stories and interviews making allegations of abuse ( no suit was ever filed ) . Adidam charged that allegations against the church were part of an extortion plot .

The church issued conflicting statements in response to the coverage . A lawyer for the church said that controversial sexual activities had only occurred during the " Garbage and Goddess " period years earlier . Shortly after , an official church spokesman said that " tantra @-@ style encounters " of the kind described in allegations were still occurring , but were mostly confined to an inner circle . This confirmed the stories by former members that such activities had continued up to the time of the lawsuits and interviews , but had been kept hidden . The church said that no illegal acts had taken place and that the movement had a right to continue experiments in lifestyles .

Two lawsuits were filed against Adi Da and the church in California in 1985 . The O 'Mahoney suit was dismissed the next year . The other lawsuit and several threatened suits in subsequent years were settled with payments and confidentiality agreements , negatively impacting member morale and bleeding the organization financially .

= = = " Divine Emergence " and final years ( 1986 ? 2008 ) = = =

On January 11 , 1986 , distressed by what he felt was the futility of his work , Adi Da experienced a physical and psychological crisis . Doctors diagnosed exhaustion and stress , but he afterward described it as a death and resurrection . As in previous and subsequent similar episodes , Adi Da attributed special significance to it , calling it his " Divine Emergence " . From this point on , he said that one needed only to meditate on his image or body in order to " participate in his enlightened state " .

Adi Da had predicted that by the year 2000 he would be recognized by the entire world for his unique spiritual realization . When this failed to occur , he experienced another breakdown . This was said to initiate another period , where Adi Da would shift from " active teaching " to silent ? spiritual blessing " to counteract negative forces in the world . He nonetheless continued to write books , make art , and give talks to his followers , but with an increased emphasis on what he called " silent darshan " .

In 2000 , some followers of spiritual teacher Frederick Lenz joined Adidam , reportedly upsetting long @-@ time followers who felt the new members were undeservedly privileged ( Lenz , also known as " Zen Master Rama " , had committed suicide in 1998 ) . Adi Da claimed to have been Swami Vivekananda in a past life , and said that in a previous incarnation Lenz was then a disciple .

Adi Da later began exhibiting his digital art and photography . Followers reported that he died of cardiac arrest on November 27 , 2008 at his home in Fiji , while working on his art .

Adi Da had four children : three biological daughters with three different women , and one adopted daughter . These include actress Shawnee Free Jones .

= = Philosophy = =

Fundamental to Adi Da 's religious philosophy is the essentially " eastern " religious concept that the purpose of human life is spiritual enlightenment , an awakening to ultimate reality that is the natural state of all human beings ( though seemingly obscured . )

= = = " Self @-@ contraction " = = =

Adi Da said that what keeps human beings from experiencing this ultimate , enlightened reality is

the activity of ego , which he stated is the source of all emotional , psychological , and spiritual dissatisfaction . He called this activity " self @-@ contraction , " and defined it as a psychological mechanism lying somewhere beneath the normal level of conscious awareness , leading people to believe they are limited , suffering individuals . He said that fundamentally , all efforts to unite with the divine from the point of view of a separate self were futile , since that separate self itself is illusory .

= = = " Seventh stage realization " = = =

Adi Da developed a map of potential human and spiritual evolution that he called " the seven stages of life " .

First Stage ? " individuation / physical development "

Second Stage ? " socialization "

Third Stage ? " integration / mental development "

Fourth Stage ? " spiritualization / Divine Communion "

Fifth Stage ? " spiritual ascent "

Sixth Stage ? " abiding in consciousness "

Seventh Stage ? " Divine Enlightenment : awakening from all egoic limitations "

The first six stages account for all permutations of religion and culture throughout history , as well as levels of personal development . Adi Da categorized the fourth , fifth , and sixth stages of life as the highest respective stages of human development . He characterized those who have reached these stages as " saints " , " yogis " , and " sages " , including other religious figures such as Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ .

Relative to this spectrum , Adi Da stated that while some " yogis , saints , and sages " had occasionally indicated some awareness of a " seventh stage " , only he as a unique avatar had ever been born fully invested with the capability to fully embody it ; furthermore , as the first " Seventh Stage Adept " only he would ever need to ( or be capable of ) doing so . He stated that the seventh stage has nothing to do with development and does not come after the sixth stage in a sequential manner . The culminating awareness of this seventh stage is a permanent , natural state of ? open @-@ eyed ecstasy " , for which Adi Da employed the Sanskrit term Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi .

Adi Da insisted that since he solely embodied seventh stage realization , devotional worship of him would henceforth be the exclusive means for others to free themselves from " self @-@ contraction " , thereby allowing them to " participate in his enlightened state " ( i.e. attain awareness themselves of the seventh stage , or " realize " it . )

= = Adidam = =

Adidam refers to both the organization of Adi Da 's devotees and the religion he taught . The organization , or church , founded initially in 1972 , went by many earlier names , including the Dawn Horse Communion , the Free Communion Church , the Laughing Man Institute , the Crazy Wisdom Fellowship , the Way of Divine Ignorance , and the Johannine Daist Communion .

Adidam presupposes an eastern view of divinity and accepts the concepts of karma , reincarnation , chakras , etc . It also employs many Sanskrit terms and concepts . God , or the divine , is seen as a principle and energy , a consciousness that predates creation but is not a willful creator itself .

Though earlier manifestations were more eclectic and experimental , over time Adidam increasingly came to resemble the Hindu tradition of bhakti yoga . The practice of Adidam is now defined by its emphasis on a devotional relationship to Adi Da , whom followers see as an enlightened source of power serving as the sole gateway to the divine . Adi Da 's followers often refer to him simply as " Beloved " . Through devotion and service , it is believed that the follower 's consciousness is gradually transformed in the image of Adi Da 's . While devotion to Adi Da and the study of his teachings are the primary features of Adidam , other specified practices are also prescribed , including the study of other religious texts , physical exercises , regulation of sexuality , and a raw vegan diet .

Adi Da said that after his death there would not be any further teachings or " revelations " , and that his message was complete . His artwork , writings , and the religious hermitages and sanctuaries " empowered " by his presence are to remain as expressions of his teaching and being . He was emphatic that no individual assert themselves as his representative or heir .

While the church is based on Naitaba Island , Fiji , there are five officially designated ashrams , or " sanctuaries " , belonging to Adidam . Three are located in North America , with another in Hawaii . Followers of Adidam have been ambitious and prolific in their dissemination of Adi Da 's books and teachings ; however , the church is estimated to have remained more or less constant at approximately 1 @, @ 000 members worldwide since 1974 , with a high rate of turnover among membership .

= = Works = =

= = = Books = = =

Adi Da wrote prolifically about his spiritual philosophy , creating the Dawn Horse Press in 1973 to publish his books . It continues to print many Adi Da @-@ authored titles . Best known among these is his autobiography , The Knee of Listening . First published in 1972 , it has been reissued in a number of editions , undergoing extensive revisions and additions . The first edition was 271 pages long ; the latest is 840 .

= = = Art = = =

In the last decade of his life , Adi Da created visual art . These works were primarily photographic and digitally produced . He labeled his style " Transcendental Realism . " In 2007 Adi Da 's works were included in an exhibition collateral to the Venice Biennale in Italy curated by Italian art historian Achille Bonito Oliva ; the exhibit then moved to Florence . His work has been shown by galleries in New York City and Amsterdam .

The Spectra Suites , a book of Adi Da 's art , has an introduction by American art historian and critic Donald Kuspit .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critique = = =

= = = = Ken Wilber = = = =

From 1980 to 1990 , philosophical theorist and author Ken Wilber wrote a number of enthusiastic endorsements and forewords for Adi Da 's books , including The Dawn Horse Testament , The Divine Emergence of the World @-@ Teacher , and Scientific Proof of the Existence of God Will Soon Be Announced by the White House ! Wilber also recommended Adi Da as a spiritual teacher to those interested in his own writings .

Later , Wilber alternated between praise and pointed criticism . In his last public statement concerning Adi Da he wrote : " I affirm all of the extremes of my statements about Da : he is one of the greatest spiritual Realizers of all time , in my opinion , and yet other aspects of his personality lag far behind those extraordinary heights . By all means look to him for utterly profound revelations , unequaled in many ways ; yet step into his community at your own risk . "

= = = = Others = = = =

In 1982 , yoga and religion scholar Georg Feuerstein formally became a follower of Adi Da , and wrote a number of introductions to Adi Da books . He later renounced this affiliation , becoming publicly critical of Adi Da and the community surrounding him in Fiji . Feuerstein devoted a chapter to Adi Da in his 1991 book Holy Madness : Spirituality , Crazy @-@ Wise Teachers , and Enlightenment . In the introduction to the 2006 edition , Feuerstein describes having edited the sections devoted to Adi Da to reflect these changes in opinion .

Asian religions scholar Scott Lowe was an early follower of Adi Da and lived in the community in 1974 . In an essay later analyzing what he had witnessed as well as Adi Da 's subsequent career , he perceives a pattern of " abusive , manipulative , and self @-@ centered " behavior , saying " does it necessarily follow that the individual who is ' liberated ' is free to indulge in what appear to be egocentric , hurtful , and damaging actions in the name of spiritual freedom ? I personally think not , while acknowledging the subtlety and complexity of the ongoing debate " .

Lowe and others have also criticized Adi Da 's claims toward the exclusivity of his realization . In part , critics point to his earlier message strongly rejecting the necessity for any religious authority or belief , due to " enlightenment " being every individual 's natural condition .

Adi Da heavily edited subsequent editions of his books , for which they have been criticized as auto @-@ hagiography and self @-@ mythology .

University of Southern California religion professor Robert Ellwood wrote , " Accounts of life with [ Adi Da ] in his close @-@ knit spiritual community [ describe ] extremes of asceticism and indulgence , of authoritarianism and antinomianism ... Supporters of the alleged avatar rationalize such eccentricities as shock therapy for the sake of enlightenment . "

= = = Endorsements = = =

In a foreword to the 2004 edition of Adi Da 's autobiography The Knee Of Listening , religious scholar Jeffrey Kripal described Adi Da 's total corpus as being " the most doctrinally thorough , the most philosophically sophisticated , the most culturally challenging , and the most creatively original literature currently available in the English language . "

Psychiatrist Gabriel Cousens wrote an endorsement for Adi Da 's biography The Promised God @-@ Man Is Here , saying , " it has deepened my experience of Him as the Divine Gift established in the cosmic domain " . He also mentions Adi Da in his books Spiritual Nutrition and Tachyon Energy .

Psychiatrist Elizabeth Kübler @-@ Ross wrote an endorsement for Adi Da 's book Easy Death , referring to it as a " masterpiece " .