

Introduction

from *Awakening Through the Veils (A Seeker's Guide)*

by Ric Weinman

The world of awakening is a microcosm of the world at large: full of hopes, desires, fantasies, misconceptions, misunderstandings, projections, attachments, and disappointments. Yet it also contains spaces of great peace and beingness, openness and love. Like the world at large, it is ruled by both karma and Grace, even though it may often appear as if Grace has taken on the more secondary role.

This book presents an extensive Map of the landscape of awakening as well as a how-to guide for both awakening and deepening into awakening, given as concrete steps, starting from wherever you are now. This Map, which I call the I-Tree, describes the creation and evolution of ego, from Divinity to the human sense of self, level by level. Then it becomes an Awakening Map, since each new level of ego-creation becomes a level of trance from which awareness must awaken to realize its true nature.

Awakening starts with this conundrum: we know that all is one, and yet we experience ourselves as a particular, separate part of that oneness. We also know that this separate sense of self or *I*, which is our ego, is found at the root of all of our issues and all of our suffering, which also impacts our energy system and our health. So, whether we want to address our suffering or ill-health, or we simply want to reach a deeper state of being and oneness, we eventually have to confront the very thing we take for granted as the foundational piece of our existence: our sense of being a separate self. This is the fundamental principle of awakening, and it tells us that this sense of personal ego is not a given but simply the experience we are having—as if we were locked into a very deep trance—and that we can awaken from that into a much freer existence.

Unfortunately, there is a lot of confusion around this process, which will be addressed in the first part of this book. This confusion is amplified by the fact that, contrary to some notions, awakening isn't some final event that turns a living human being into some kind of finished and static reality. Although awakening does happen in a moment and does mark the end of a particular level of ego-existence, that initial awakening is just the beginning of a new process, a new journey of awakening, which will have many levels and phases. Because these levels and phases are not much written about, they are also not well understood. When writers share their experiences, they often use the same general terms to mean very different things. Many authors write about whatever their present experience is but not the process that got them there. In addition, even when people are in the same phase of awakening, their processes are unique, and so their experiences—and what they communicate to others—can vary quite widely. All of this can create quite a bit of confusion, both for those who have awakened and for those who haven't.

For those who haven't awakened, the core confusion arises from not knowing what awakening really is, as well as not knowing what may effectively get them there from where they are now.

For those who have awakened, the main source of confusion comes from not understanding what has actually happened to them, since invariably it will not match their expectations, whether they have read about awakening beforehand or not. This is not surprising, for awakening creates a sudden and fundamental change, and what changes is not some aspect of your mind or emotions, but you yourself, your core experience of who you are. One cannot really know in advance what that will be like. Your life goes on, but now it is suddenly different. There is a sense of something missing. Something familiar in the fabric of your life has disappeared,

and a particular quality of emptiness sets in, accompanied by a new sense of freedom. You may still cling to what was, to the experience of yourself in the life you had before, but that part of your life is over and a new phase has begun. Yet as you go forward, most aspects of your life continue unchanged, because the basic patterns of the life you had created haven't gone anywhere, and you can't help but carry your old emotional and mental patterns with you. If you were married and have children, you are still married and have children. You still have to go to work in the morning and/or get the kids to school. You still have the same body issues, you still prefer the same foods, and if you were an introvert you are still an introvert. Yet the single thing that awakening has changed makes all of what hasn't changed—all of what you can name and point to in your life—seem completely different because your relationship to all of it has changed.

This is the bizarre paradox of awakening: *everything completely changes and yet everything remains the same*. The varied textures of life go on, yet with a new emptiness and a new freedom. There is now a space in the place where a familiar sense of self used to be, and yet for most people, in spite of the sense of loss of the familiar, that space will typically be experienced as spaciousness. For most people, this generates enormous confusion—about *what* has happened, about *who* it has happened to, and about how to live from this new place.

The intent of this book is to provide a broad understanding of the nature of awakening. If you haven't yet awakened, it will guide you towards an actual awakening, showing you how to make yourself 'ripe' for it. If you have already awakened, the book will help orient you as to where you are and what is happening to you, as well as provide some information as to how to move from one phase of awakening to another. This book aims to be a guided tour of the awakening process, mapping the spiritual journey as you move forward from wherever you are right now.

The book is divided into two main sections. The first section covers more of the general information about awakening: the nature of awakening vs. our expectations, what happens in its aftermath, working with teachers, the different kinds of karma, etc., and an overview of the Map of awakening being presented in this book. The second section is the how-to. It is a guide for how to get ripe for awakening, how to move into awakening, and what is needed to move into each subsequent level. . .