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+ FRANK GEHRY AND THE L.A. RIVER
WHEN IT'S RIGHT TO SAY "I'M WRONG"
THE TRANSCENDENT ORGASM

A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

By Genie Davis

Swami Premodaya's prescription for transformation

"Everybody, whether they know it or not, is seeking the truth, God, reality," observes spiritual master Bodhisattva Shree Swami Premodaya, founder of I-Coda, or the International Centers of Divine Awakening. The question is, how do you find them—it—since all are part of the same whole?



And further, can you find it on your own? The guru thinks not. "We all need help. Trees help us breathe, sunlight gives us life, we are all interdependent on each other whether we recognize it or not," he explains. Likewise, "when people turn in a spiritual direction, they find books to read and people to talk to; you don't have to do it on your own."

Premodaya's own spiritual growth began early. A Holocaust survivor who came to the U.S. at age 4, he remembers his first spiritual awakening into a prolonged state of ecstatic bliss at age 12. He attended New York University, worked as a painter and lyricist, and struggled through the counter-culture years of the 1960s and '70s, til an epiphany at age 28 led him to a career in psychology. Along the way he had intense, often terrifying mystical experiences before fortuitously discovering a book by the controversial guru Osho, or Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, whom he says he instantly recognized as his spiritual master.

He was formally initiated as a disciple of Osho in 1983, and

in 2000 took Western-born spiritual teacher Gangaji as his "second master." Three years later, Premodaya had what he describes as a divine encounter that felt like a direct message from God, which led him to leave his career and make himself available to seekers.

A spiritual master, notes Premodaya, "is no different from any other human being. But he isn't speaking for himself as a person; he is just the vehicle to transmit the divine word. It is an amazing and humbling position to be in, because you are aware that it isn't you, that the Divine is using you to benefit others."

Most spiritual teachers would shy away from the term, but Premodaya refreshingly describes himself as being "in the transformation business," because transformation doesn't just happen by magic. Asked to describe I-CODA, he says it's "a vehicle to interact with people looking for spiritual guidance. The purpose is to serve spiritual seekers.

"If you want the real, the Divine itself, Truth with a capital T," he continues, "you owe it to yourself to go beyond limiting belief systems. If you really want transformation, you ultimately want transcendence. To reach that sincere spiritual place isn't a self-help practice."

I-CODA works with individuals at their own pace, "working organically and helping them go forward as they want to go forward," and offers traditional residential retreats, classes and satsangs—meetings of spiritual seekers, workshops and public meetings.

"There is every kind of person in the world, and all have different ways of wanting to grow," he says. "We are not promoting a specific way of life, or selling a philosophy or religion. Unfortunately we live in a time and place where people think it is a self-help practice, but you need guidance."

For those seeking planetary transformation, Premodaya councils that, "Transformation is an individual journey. The answer is always the same—you must go beyond mental constructs and delve into yourself to create transformation."

He notes that all world teachers essentially say the same thing. "Buddha said be a light unto yourself, Jesus said that the kingdom of God is within. For that matter, Socrates said it: Know yourself. We're not saying anything different. The unit of consciousness and spirituality is the individual." Large-scale planetary change only works, he says, when individuals decide to change.

To learn more, go to www.i-coda.org.