

# Filmmakers' Statement ~ A Ten-Year Journey

## Blythe

In October of 2008, I was invited to go on a pilgrimage to film Avatar Adi Da Samraj at his Hermitage Ashram on the remote island of Naitauba in Fiji. As with all traditional Hermitages, it is a complete ordeal to journey there. After three plane rides and a five-hour boat ride crossing the Koro Sea and the reef surrounding Naitauba, I finally arrived at this remarkable island.

We were a film team gathered from all over the world to document the daily sightings of the spiritual master Adi Da Samraj. At the time, we were not intending to make an introductory biographical film. We were there simply to film Avatar Adi Da whenever the opportunity arose, to capture on video what we came to recognize as a most pristine state of consciousness, manifesting in this human being.

Having spent six weeks doing just that, I left the Island early on the morning of November 27, 2008, only to hear later that evening that Avatar Adi Da had suddenly passed from the body.

Struck by the realization that we had fortuitously filmed the final forty days of his bodily life, I knew that we were now propelled into a new filmmaking journey. We immediately began to gather the vast array of archival footage from Adi Da's thirty-six years of teaching and blessing, and began to construct the foundation of a feature biographical documentary. After fifteen months of initial documentation, writing, and editing preparation, we passed the project over to Peter Harvey-Wright and an Australian team, who spent the next three and a half years doing a great deal of work toward developing a feature documentary.

## Peter

As a longtime filmmaker, I was very conscious of the general expectation that people have of the documentary medium—in particular, the expectation that there should be a “journalistic balance” in one's approach to dealing with any particular subject.

As a student of Avatar Adi Da who was also making a film about his life, that approach was not an option. And, to be real about it, I didn't want to approach it that way, either. What I did want to do was to make a film based on respect—respect for the fullness of who and what Avatar Adi Da is, and respect for the viewer who does not know him at all, coming to him fresh and therefore wanting to see a film that is real, grounded, and open about the truth of what we perceive in Adi Da. I wanted the film to be a genuine, heart-felt statement that the viewer of Conscious Light could take or leave as they will.

In this film we are attempting to give the viewer real insight into why anyone would consider becoming a student of Avatar Adi Da, conveying something of the masterly discrimination that Adi Da brings to human life, and enabling them to feel for themselves why his students are heart-attracted to Avatar Adi Da as an authentic spiritual realizer and master.

Adi Da's life and work had been documented to an unprecedented degree over nearly four decades, so our challenge was finding the gems that were right for this film.



The key that became clear over time was that Avatar Adi Da's own voice could provide the real through-line and scaffolding for this film. As we interviewed many students of Adi Da in California, New York, Fiji, and Australia, it also became increasingly clear that their stories—providing personal accounts of their experiences with Avatar Adi Da in their own words—were crucially important as authentic verification of Adi Da himself.

In 2013, active work on the film stopped for a period of time for financial reasons, but the process of ongoing consideration about the film continued.

Then, in 2016, I was asked if the film could possibly be completed. Having continued to live with and consider the film during the three-year hiatus, I was now ready to bring fresh ideas to the table. Fortuitously, Blythe was now living close by, and we could work together.

## **Peter and Blythe**

After three intensive months of editing in early 2017, an entirely new film began to emerge—one that we both felt had the potential to become a very strong documentary. Others agreed, but it was also obvious that there was a missing piece.

It was now nine years since Avatar Adi Da had passed. During this time, the international community of his devotees had undergone a notable transformation—a deepening of daily practice and of spiritual participation with Avatar Adi Da that needed to be conveyed in the film.

To document this, we knew we had to return to Naitauba Island—the best location to record those whose direct spiritual participation with Adi Da was obvious.

This journey was also about receiving essential input from Adi Da's senior renunciate devotees to ensure that the film conveyed the fullness of Adi Da as Avatar.

On Naitauba, we filmed devotees speaking of their spiritual participation with Avatar Adi Da within a sacred culture devoted to fully living and practicing his teachings. It had an immense impact on us as filmmakers. It was an immersion into the living depths of what we were hearing and feeling throughout the process of making it.

We interviewed eighteen of Adi Da's devotees from North America, Asia, Europe, and Australia, and listened hour after hour to stories of how Avatar Adi Da's transmission was continually drawing them into a profound state of being. And while we could only include mere glimpses of these interviews in the film, they nevertheless provided the missing "piece" that enabled us to complete the film .

In *Conscious Light* we have done our best to both truly represent Avatar Adi Da Samraj—conveying something of the living spiritual process that continues to unfold—but to do so in a way that allows the viewer to either feel or not, the truth of his life and offering to all.

