Venkataramana was from his youth immersed in meditation. He left school and hid in the Arunachala Hills near Madurai in South India. He concentrated on the Supreme Reality, spending years of unbroken meditation. He became insensitive to hunger or thirst or insects. He at last became convinced that he had realized the Supreme and that his Self was identical with the Supreme Reality. He was proclaimed by his followers a Jivanmukta, and a Maharshi. Called after this Bhagavan Ramana, he lived at an ashram in Tiruvannamalai. His kind face, his smile, and shining eyes spoke of peace within and inspired others to believe that he had indeed attained Samadhi.

His major teaching, was to "know thyself" and thus escape the world's problems. Many, both foreign and Indian, found in him a demonstration of the truth of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy and the possibility of attaining oneness with God.
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi said that "The One Self, The Sole Reality, alone exists eternally." The Being he named Arunachala, a word compounded from various words meaning "perfection," "being," "consciousness" and "bliss." He taught that man should realize that he is God. Even more than Sri Aurobindo, he felt that man only need realize that fact and he needs no more. Some spoke of God saying, "Thou art my father, Thou art my mother, Thou art my relations, my possessions and all," but Maharshi said, "Why not say, 'I am Thou.'"

A disciple of Maharshi, Swami Rajeswarananda summarized his teachings to the effect that Maharshi is Himself God:

- He is the absolute and lives in the Infinite. He is the Eternal rooted in immortality. He is the center to which all radii of individual souls converge. He is the center of an infinite circle without a circumference. He is the center and circumference as well. ... He is the sexless Self, the immortal and eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omnipresent.

Maharshi's teaching was that the way to immortality is to "dive within and realize, God, Guru, and Self are the same." Grace, Light, and Spirit—the means to realization are all within the Self, for "nothing is external to the Self." The realization of Self brings those who finally achieve it "Pure Consciousness, a state of impersonality, timelessness, spacelessness, causelessness, egolessness, freedom, and peace."

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1. Sri Maharshi Ramana, Erase the Ego, p. IX
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. XVI.
4. Ibid., pp. II, III.
5. Ibid., p. XII.
The way to achieve this realization is the search of the individual within himself. He first asks, "Who am I?", and then, "Where did I come from?" He who finds that the Self is the source of the ego has learned the secret. The body is not the Self. The mind is not the Self. The Self is not within the body. The way to achieve the Self is to comprehend that you are the Self and need simply to remain the Self. When once the ignorance is removed that thinks of the body as Self, the Self alone remains. The birth and death of the body are compared to the formation and later disappearance of clouds in the sky; just as these do not affect the sky, so birth and death do not affect the Real Self.

Just as the beautiful peacock is in the substance of the egg, so he taught that the world is none other than the Self. The individual, the world, and God he held to be illusions contained in the Supreme Reality, just as a rope may be mistaken for a snake. The ego must disappear in the knowledge that it has no separate existence, but is simply an illusory manifestation of the Supreme Reality. The mind is what says "I"; because the mind is unreal, the "I" or ego is also unreal. The only "I" that truly exists is the "I Am", the "That", which is the Absolute Self or Perfect Being. It is unnecessary really to tell anyone how to realize the Self, because only the Self really is. Remove the ignorance that hides this fact and the Self shines forth. This is done by removing the non-selves or sheaths by considering what we are not, in order that these can be eliminated so that only the Real Self remains.

6. Sri Maharshi Ramana, Erase the Ego, pp. VI, VII.
7. Ibid., p. IX.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. XI.
10. Ibid., p. XII.
Maharshi's idea that most offends Christians in the West is his use of the term, "I Am That I Am", used in Exodus as the title of the God revealed to Moses. He interpreted this to mean that a person must not think "I am God", but rather to realize "I Am." Know "I am God." "Your duty is to Be, not to be this or that." "I am that I Am" sums up the whole truth; the method is summarized in "Be Still," which is interpreted to mean destroy yourself, that is, every name and form. Just as a man does not need to keep thinking that he is a man, so there is no need for him to keep thinking "I am God", but simply to be still and Be God.

It is not by knowledge alone that this realization is possible. Maharshi felt that True Knowledge, without any relation to other things and without phenomena was the only knowledge, for it was ignorance to know everything except the Knower, because the Knower alone has true existence. "The Self being Knowledge Absolute, it is neither knowing or not knowing." Our intellect, or Buddhi, is of no use to realize the Self. To see the world or external objects, the mind and the reflected light (Chidabhasa) are necessary." To see the Self, the mind has simply to be turned inwards and there is no need of reflected light.

Meditation is not the way to realization. "Meditating 'I am That' is of no use; for meditation is of the mind, and the Self is beyond the mind." He felt that the ego would perish by itself in the "Quest for its own reality. The way was not in seeking to abolish the ego, but in seeking the true source of the ego, which

11. Sri Maharshi Ramana, Erase the Ego, p. XVI.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. XVIII.
14. Ibid., p. XXXIV.
15. Ibid., p. XX.
is the True Self within. Man must give up thinking, the source of troubles, and practice introspection. Simply grasp the fact of the "I Am", and realization of the final Reality comes. 16

He compared the condition of man in sleep to the Self. Then the ego does not control. In deep sleep there is no consciousness of the existence of the body. Then nothing but the true Self exists. In deep sleep state the identification of the body being lost, there are no perceptions; similarly in the transcendental state, identity with Brahman places the man in harmony with everything, and there is nothing apart from his Self. 17 No discrimination between right and wrong appears, and therefore, he regarded them as really non-existent. Sin comes when man tries to make distinction between the two. Even time and space do not really exist, for we as Unchanging Self are the same at all times and in all places. The dreamless sleep he felt was not ignorance, but the pure state of being; wakefulness he called ignorance. "There is full awareness in sleep and total ignorance in waking." 18 "The sleeping 'I' is the real 'I' that subsists through all states of waking, dream, or sleep." 19

The true method of attainment he set forth as:

Absolute surrender to the Supreme Lord, whereby the "I" and "mine" are destroyed, is the one means to realize Immortality. The Supreme Being, the one Ultimate Cause of the universe, manifests Himself as many, which do not exist apart from Him. To destroy the ego and BE the Self is the Supreme method of attainment. 20

16. Sri Maharshi Ramana, Erase the Ego, p. XXI.
17. Ibid., pp. 42, 43.
18. Ibid., pp. 27-29.
19. Ibid., p. 32.
20. Ibid., p. 28.
"Self is eternal and self-evident." "The Real Self is formless and cannot be seen as an object."21 The consciousness of Self exists every moment. "This consciousness is the eternal Being and only Being."22 At the same time he held that the world truly exists, because the world is Brahman and All is Brahman.23 Rebirth must continue until "the body-sense disappears by merging into the Source—the Self."24 The purpose of sacred books is to "indicate the existence of the Higher Power (The Self) and the way to gain it."25 When this is achieved, they are no longer of value to the individual. Actually Realization is a misleading term, Maharshi said, for the Real remains ever the same. It is attained, not as something new, but by coming to True Knowledge. As previously we had regarded the unreal as real, now we become aware that it is unreal and only the Self truly exists. "Realization is not something to be gained afresh. The Self is already realized. All that is necessary is to get rid of the thought, 'I have not realized.'"26

Maharshi believed in destiny (karma) as predetermining the course of man’s life; however, he believed that man could in this life cancel the pre-determined fate by separating himself from the body and so being set free from its pleasures, pains, and subsequent destiny. He explained:

As long as a man is a doer he also reaps the fruits of his deeds, but as soon as he realizes the Self through inquiry as

21. Sri Maharshi Ramana, Erase the Ego, p. 34.
22. Ibid., p. 35.
23. Ibid., p. 36.
24. Ibid., p. 40.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., pp. 40, 41.
to who is the doer, his sense of being the doer falls away and the triple karma (destiny) is ended. This is the state of eternal liberation.27

Sri Ramana summarized the nature of Reality thus:

(a) Existence without beginning or end—eternal.
(b) Existence everywhere, endless—infinite.
(c) Existence underlying all forms, all changes, all forces, all matter, and all spirit. The many change and pass away, but the one always endures.
(d) The one displaces the triads such as knower, knowledge, and known. The triads are only appearance in time and space, whereas the Reality lies beyond and behind them. They are like a mirage over the Reality. They are the result of delusion.28

27. Sri Maharsi Ramana, Erase the Ego, pp. 46, 47.
28. Ibid., p. 44.