

# A LIFE OF BLUE\*

Achieve Freedom Through Unconventional Living and World Travel.

## An Interview with Raam Dev: Listen to the Whispers of Your Heart and Soul

“What’s your biggest, craziest dream, the thing that waters your eyes when you think about it? If you want to live before you die, chase that.”



*Interview by Conni Biesalski. Sign up for the free letter via [Email](#) or [RSS](#) & follow me on [Twitter](#) and [Google+](#).*

Raam Dev is one of my absolute favorite bloggers. I love his writing, his philosophies and ideas so much, it’s crazy.

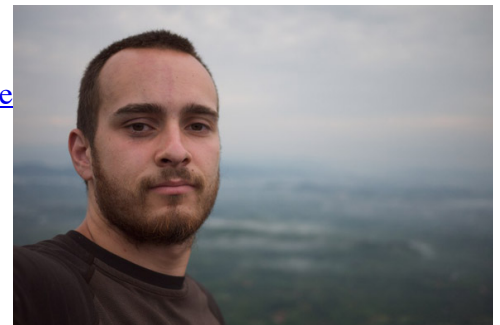
Raam is a writer, thinker, engineer, minimalist and nomad. On [his blog](#), Raam is dedicated to the **exploration of what it means to be human**. He created a community of **passionate changemakers**, with which he inspires people to **think about life from a different angle**.

Raam’s background is quite unique from a Western perspective. His parents raised him with Buddhist and Hindu teachings as well as ancient Indian culture. He was home schooled as a child and at the age of twelve his parents gave him the responsibility of teaching himself. So as a teen he taught himself computer science and software engineering and started his first business when he was sixteen. He never had any formal education.

In early 2010, he sold nearly all his possessions and left a decade-long career in the IT industry to pursue a childhood dream of traveling the world. He arrived in India with \$1,500 in his pocket and one backpack.

Besides essays and notes on his blogs, Raam also publishes a [subscription journal](#), for which he used [permission pricing](#) (reader survey) to determine the price. He follows his own set of [ethical rules for generating income from creative work](#) (please do check out). [I’m a big fan of his business philosophies and practices as they resonate with my own personal beliefs.]

A while back, he published an amazing ebook called [Small Ways to Make a Big Difference](#), for which over 40 bloggers contributed more than 100 ways to live more sustainable, happier and healthier.



I am really excited to present you the interview I did with Raam and am sure you will love it as much as I do!

**Conni:** *Your background is extremely interesting and unconventional. You grew up in a world of Buddhist and Hindu teachings and your childhood was oriented towards an Indian culture. Can you tell the readers a little bit about how your past has influenced the person that you are today?*

**Raam:** My parents took a very unconventional path when they got married. Both of them had been raised in traditional American families but decided they wanted to do something different and raise a family with ideals and teaching oriented to those of Hinduism and Buddhism. They were, and still are, as unconventional as anyone I know (something I recognized only after becoming an adult).

I grew up eating and sleeping on the floor, meditating and doing yoga every day, and living with simple, but strong values. Things like honesty, integrity, and character were held to the highest regard and weakness in any of those was clearly discouraged.

But they also encouraged things like independence and exploration. I remember my dad telling me once when I was 14, “When you turn 18, you can take everything I’ve taught you and throw it away if you’d like. All I can do is show you what I’ve learned, but you need to walk your own path.”

That philosophy of not accepting things blindly, or just because someone else believes them, is one of the greatest things I feel my parents, and my upbringing, has taught me. It’s the basis for everything I do. We should learn, but experiment. We should listen, but make our own decisions.

**Conni:** *You don’t have any formal education, as you were home-schooled and after the age of twelve your parents let you teach yourself. Did you ever encounter problems with not having anything like a certificate to proof your knowledge or skills? How did this way of learning enrich you and your life? Would you recommend it?*

**Raam:** I was fascinated by computers from an early age, building my first PC when I was 9 and learning computer programming when I was 12. By the time I was ready to work, I was competent enough to demonstrate my skills. That ability alone got me in the door for interviews.

If anyone asked about my education, I simply explained that I was home schooled and had no certificates (I was surprised by how little this bothered people, but it may have been an artifact of the computer profession). The one time I was asked this question during an interview, my potential employer simply drilled me with a few computer questions to gauge my knowledge and, upon easily passing, gave me the job.

Being given the responsibility to teach myself when I was younger certainly helped develop skills necessary to learn things on my own. My self-learning skills feel practically innate and I feel no limitations on what I can learn.

The world literally feels like my playground and anything that catches my curiosity becomes an adventure of discovery into the unknown. Learning from such a wide array of topics helps me find common connections between different topics and adds to the richness of my understanding of the world around me.

The downside to being given full responsibility to teach myself at such a young age was that I could decide which subjects didn’t interest me and avoid them altogether. I disliked math and history, so my education in both of those practically stopped at 9th grade, whereas my study in science accelerated so fast that I was reading college-level biology books when I was 15.

In this regard, I think some adult supervision is good, as adults have a better understanding of how topics like math and history can help us in other areas. Learning certain science topics, for example, requires understanding math concepts that I didn’t learn because I avoided math.

What I do think is incredibly effective and useful is allowing children to help guide the learning process. Their aspirations, talents, and interests should be recognized and cultivated. Instead of clumping children together and demanding they all learn the same set of stuff until they get to college, they should be encouraged and guided towards exploring things on their own.

**Conni:** *You say on your about page that you help people to use their imagination and dream big. What sort of*

*advice can you give us on this? And why do you think it's important to have big dreams?*

**Raam:** Our dreams make us who we are. If we're not following the thing inside that we feel we were born to do, then what exactly is the point of living?

All effort should be made to recognize what we're passionate about inside and to then chase that. I certainly wouldn't call myself an expert on this topic because I'm still learning to recognize and chase my own dreams, but I believe that it's in the chasing of those dreams that we learn who we are and what we're made of.

Here's an excerpt from an entry in my [Journal](#) that I published recently titled "Dreaming big or just big enough?":

"If you always felt you were born to do something big, something really, really big — something so big that your existence would end up shifting human history and leaving a dent in the fabric of time — what would you do?

Would you think about what your best career options were, what things you were good at, and go from there?

Would you stress out over money or financial concerns or hunker down and save your money?

Would you focus on doing things that made you comfortable or ensured that people would like you?

Would you limit your focus to things that you could achieve this lifetime?

Would you be realistic?

Or would you think about the biggest, most crazy thing you could imagine? Something that seemed so unlikely for a single human being to achieve but that, when you thought about it or talked about it, filled you with spine-tingling, eye-watering, goosebump-making surges of energy that seemed to emanate from some unknown source deep inside?

That thing that despite being so unrealistic and crazy lingers on your mind, hour after hour, day after day, week after week."

What's your biggest, craziest dream, the thing that waters your eyes when you think about it? If you want to live before you die, chase that.

**Conni:** *What advice can you give others who would like to make their life more unconventional and/or meaningful?*

**Raam:** Step outside your box. We all have boxes and we all live in them. Even being unconventional becomes a box after a while. Instead, focus on you, on what you're all about. Think about the things that define your core, not the things that define your personality or the way you dress and act, but the things that define you.

Every single one of us is unique in our own way. Even if we met someone who seems exactly like us, there's something fundamentally unique that resides within. If we cultivate that uniqueness and listen to the whispers of our heart and soul, we'll be as unconventional as anyone else and as a bonus, we'll actually be following a path that we feel we're meant to be on.

**Conni:** *You are a minimalist digital nomad. Can you describe what this lifestyle looks like? What are the advantages and challenges?*

**Raam:** I carry around a small backpack with my laptop and all my belongings inside. Everything I need fits in that one small bag. I spend long days working at cafes like Starbucks, sometimes splitting up my day by walking for an hour or two at midday to stretch my legs and clear my mind.

I prefer to plan as little as possible and often move around based on spontaneous opportunities or invitations. The disadvantages to living like this is that I feel somewhat dependent on the friends who give me a place to stay (I'm not quite financially stable enough to rent my own places).

Being so nomadic also doesn't provide much room for developing relationships with people who don't connect as easily through other mediums like phone and email. Leaving can be confusing and emotionally difficult.

But in my heart I know that I'm a traveler. Travel enriches my life and staying in one place creates stagnation in my soul. It's hard to describe how fundamental travel feels to my wellbeing, but after living the 9-to-5 lifestyle for more than a decade, I know how soul-sucking staying in one place for too long feels.

Travel makes me feel alive and it offers an ever-changing perspective. It makes me reconsider everything I know and allows me to relate with people on a level that doesn't change with distance or time.

**Conni:** *One personal thought on your blog is “The status quo is because it is not questioned.” and you state that there is ‘more to life than the status quo’. From your perspective, where do you see the problem with the status quo of today and can this ‘more’ look like?*

**Raam:** It feels to me that self-empowerment is a neglected and undervalued concept. Everything we need to live a happy, successful, and adventure-filled life resides right here within each of us.

The status quo of looking outside ourselves for answers — to gurus, swamis, religious leaders, poets, writers, motivational speakers, or historical figures — disregards the immense wealth of knowledge and power that exists within each and every one of us.

There's nothing wrong with learning from people who have undertaken inspirational journey's and have chosen to share those lessons and experiences with us, but to put them on a pedestal and treat them as God is disrespecting our true self. Having great respect for someone doesn't require giving away our own self-respect.

If we recognize this potential within, we'll discover an endless source of wonder, inspiration, and wisdom that could never compare to what is offered by something or someone external to ourselves.

**Thanks again to Raam for taking the time to answer my questions!**

**Check out his blog [right here!](#)**