

Nonduality Salon Presents

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Excerpts from Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj's *I AM THAT*

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The goal: Liberation through Self-Realization.

The gospel of self-realization

The idea of enlightenment is of utmost importance. Just to know that there is such possibility changes one's entire outlook. It acts like a burning match in a heap of saw dust. A spark of truth can burn up a mountain of lies. The very hearing of it is a promise of enlightenment. (100-101)

The possibility becomes a certainty when the notion of enlightenment appears in the mind. Once a living being has heard and understood that deliverance is within his reach, he will never forget it, for it is the first message from within. It will take roots and grow and in due course take the blessed shape of the Guru. (275)

The gospel of self-realization, once heard, will never be forgotten. Like a seed left in the ground, it will wait for the right season, and sprout and grow into a mighty tree. (182)

Just puzzling over my words and trying to grasp their full meaning is a sadhana quite efficient for breaking down the wall. (192)

All your going and coming, seeking pleasure, loving and hating - all this shows that you struggle against limitations, self-imposed or accepted. In your ignorance, you make mistakes and cause pain to yourself and others, but the urge is there and shall not be denied. The same urge that seeks birth, happiness and death, shall seek understanding and liberation. It is like a spark of fire in a cargo of cotton. You may not know

about it, but sooner or later the ship will burst in flames. Liberation is a natural process and, in the long run, inevitable. But it is within your power to bring it into the now. (474)

Without it [self-realization], you will be consumed by desires and fears, repeating themselves meaninglessly in endless suffering. Most of the people do not know that there can be an end to pain. But once they have heard the good news, obviously going beyond all strife and struggle is the most urgent task that can be. You know that you can be free and now it is up to you. Either you remain forever hungry and thirsty, longing, searching, grabbing, holding, ever losing and and sorrowing, or go out wholeheartedly in search of the state of timeless perfection to which nothing can be added, from which nothing taken away. In it all desires and fears are absent, not because they were given up, but because they have lost their meaning. (331)

To know that the known cannot be me nor mine, is liberation. Freedom from self-identification with a set of memories and habits, the state of wonder at the infinite reaches of the being, its inexhaustible creativity and total transcendence, the absolute fearlessness born from the realization of the illusoriness and transiency of every mode of consciousness - flow from a deep and inexhaustible source. To know the source as source and appearance as appearance, and oneself as the source only is self-realization. (395)

There can be progress in the preparation (sadhana). Realization is sudden. The fruit ripens slowly, but falls suddenly and without return. (332)

The preparation is gradual, the change itself is sudden and complete. Gradual change does not take you to a new level of conscious being. You need courage to let go. [If you lack courage,] it is because you are not fully convinced. Complete conviction generates both desire and courage. And meditation is the art of achieving faith through understanding. In meditation you consider the teaching received, in all its aspects and repeatedly, until out of clarity confidence is born and, with confidence, action. Conviction and action are inseparable. (492)

There are no steps to self-realization. There is nothing gradual about it. It happens suddenly and is irrevocably. You rotate into a new demension, seen from which the previous ones are

mere abstractions. Just like on sunrise you see things as they are, so on self-realization you see everything as it is. The world of illusion is left behind. (331)

With some, realization comes imperceptibly, but somehow they need convincing. They have changed, but they do not notice it. Such non-spectacular cases are often the most reliable. (291)

The experience [of self-realization] is unique and unmistakable. It will dawn on you suddenly, when the obstacles are removed to some extent. It is like a frayed rope snapping. Yours is the work at the strands. The break is bound to happen. It can be delayed, but not prevented. (502)

All will come through, not a single soul (jiva) shall be lost. (377)

For some time, the mental habits may linger in spite of the new vision, the habit of longing for the unknown past and fearing the unknown future. When you know these are of the mind only, you can go beyond them. (509)

[When the mind goes] emptiness remains, awareness remains, pure light of the conscious being remains. It is like asking what remains of a room when all the furniture is removed. A most serviceable room remains. And when even the walls are pulled down, space remains. Beyond space and time is the here and now of reality. (423)

You will recognize that you have returned to your natural state by a complete absence of all desire and fear. After all, at the root of all desire and fear is the feeling of not being what you are. Just as a dislocated joint pains only as long as it is out of shape, and is forgotten as soon as it is set right, so is all self-concern a symptom of mental distortion which disappears as soon as one is in the normal state. (332)

[On realization] That which cannot change, remains. The great peace, the deep silence, the hidden beauty of reality remain. While it cannot be conveyed through words, it is waiting for you to experience for yourself. (476)

Then, even in the body, you are not born. To be embodied or bodyless is the same to you. You reach a point when nothing can happen to you. Without body, you cannot be killed;

without possessions, you cannot be robbed; without mind, you cannot be deceived. There is no point where a desire of fear can hook on. As long as no change can happen to you, what else matters? (469)

On realization, you feel complete, fulfilled, free from the pleasure-pain complex, and yet not always able to explain what happened, why and how. You can put it only in negative terms: "Nothing is wrong with me any longer". It is only by comparison with the past that you know that you are out of it. Otherwise, you are just yourself. Don't try to convey it to others. If you can, it is not the real thing. Be silent and watch it expressing itself in action. (332)

The enlightened one (gnani).

Somehow it was very simple and easy in my case. My guru, before he died, told me: "Believe me, you are the Supreme Reality. Don't doubt my words, don't disbelieve me. I am telling you the truth, act on it". I could not forget his words and by not forgetting, I have realized. Once the guru told me: "You are the Supreme Reality", I ceased having visions and trances and became very quiet and simple. I found myself desiring and knowing less and less, until I could say in utter astonishment: "I know nothing, I want nothing." (390-1)

I was undeceived, that is all. I used to create a world and populate it. Now I don't do it any more. [Now I live] in the void beyond being and non-being, beyond consciousness. This void is also fulness; do not pity me. The mind ceased producing events. The ancient and ceaseless search stopped - I wanted nothing, expected nothing, accepted nothing as my own. There was no "me" left to strive for. Even the bare "I am" faded away. The other thing that I noticed was that I lost all my habitual certainties. Earlier I was sure of so many things, now I am sure of nothing. But I feel that I have lost nothing by not knowing, because all my knowledge was false. My not knowing was in itself knowledge of the fact that all knowledge is ignorance, that "I do not know" is the only true statement the mind can make. (392)

By looking tirelessly, I became quite empty and with that emptiness all came back to me except the mind. I find I have lost the mind irretrievably. I am neither conscious nor unconscious, I am beyond the mind and its various states and

conditions. Distinctions are created by the mind and apply to the mind only. I am pure Consciousness itself, un-broken awareness of all that is. I am in a more real state than yours. I am undistracted by the distinctions and separations which constitute a person. As long as the body lasts, it has its needs like any other, but my mental process has come to an end. My thinking, like my digestion, is unconscious and purposeful. I am not a person in your sense of the word, though I may appear a person to you. I am that infinite ocean of consciousness in which all happens. I am also beyond all existence and cognition, pure bliss of being. There is nothing I feel separate from, hence I am all. No thing is me, so I am nothing. Life will escape, the body will die, but it will not affect me in the least. Beyond space and time I am, uncaused, uncausing, yet the very matrix of existence. (221-2)

Having realized that I am with, and yet beyond the world, I became free from all desire and fear. I did not reason out that I should be free, I found myself free, unexpectedly, without the least effort. This freedom from desire and fear remained with me since then. Another thing I noticed was that I do not need to make an effort; the deed follows the thought, without delay and friction. I have also found that thoughts become self-fulfilling; things would fall in place smoothly and rightly. The main change was in the mind; it became motionless and silent, responding quickly, but not perpetuating the response. Spontaneity became a way of life, the real became natural and the natural became real. And above all, infinite affection, love, dark and quiet, radiating in all directions, embracing all, making all interesting and beautiful, significant and auspicious. (269)

The person is what I appear to be to other persons. To myself, I am the infinite expanse of consciousness in which innumerable persons emerge and disappear in endless succession. (528)

The person, the "I am this body, this mind, this chain of memories, this bundle of desires and fears" disappears, but something you may call identity remains. It enables me to become a person when required. (488)

Nothing troubles me. I offer no resistance to trouble - therefore it does not stay with me. On your side there is so much trouble. On mine there is no trouble at all. Come to my side. (192)

What is added to memory cannot be erased easily. But it can surely be done, and in fact I am doing it all the time. Like a bird on its wings, I leave no footprints. (399)

The world is like a sheet of paper on which something is typed. The reading and the meaning will vary with the reader, but the paper is the common factor, always present, rarely perceived. When the ribbon is removed, typing leaves no trace on the paper. So is my mind - the impressions keep on coming, but no trace is left. (225)

Your world is transient, changeful. My world is perfect, changeless. You can tell me what you like about your world - I shall listen carefully, even with interest, yet not for a moment shall I forget that your world is not, that you are dreaming. In mine, the words and their contents have no being. In your world nothing stays, in mine nothing changes. My world is real, while yours is made of dreams. My world has no characteristics by which it can be identified. You can say nothing about it. My silence sings, my emptiness is full, I lack nothing. In your world I appear so [with a name and shape, displaying consciousness and activity]. In mine I have being only. Nothing else. I am my world. My world is myself. It is complete and perfect. I need nothing, not even myself, for myself I cannot lose. In your world I would be most miserable. To wake up, to eat, to talk, to sleep again - what a bother! (79-81)

To me nothing ever happens. There is something changeless, motionless, immovable, rock-like, unassailable; a solid mass of pure being-consciousness-bliss. I am never out of it. Nothing can take me out of it, no torture, no calamity. (191)

[My condition is] absolutely steady. Whatever I may do, it stays like a rock - motionless. Once you have awakened into reality, you stay in it. It is self-evident and yet beyond description. (192)

All the three states [waking, sleeping, dreaming] are sleep to me. My waking state is beyond them. As I look at you, you all seem asleep, dreaming up worlds of your own. I am aware, for I imagine nothing. It is not samadhi, which is but a kind of sleep. It is just a state unaffected by the mind, free from the past and future. In your case it is distorted by desire and fear, by memories and hopes; in mine it is as it is - normal. To be a person is to be asleep. (453)

The world of mind and matter, of names and shapes, continues, but it does not matter to me at all. It is like having a shadow. It is there, following me wherever I go, but not hindering me in any way. It remains a world of experiences, but not of names and forms related to me by desires and fears. The experiences are qualitless, pure experiences, if I may say so. I call them experiences for the lack of a better word. They are like the waves on the surface of the ocean, the ever-present, but not affecting its peaceful power. (406)

I can see with the utmost clarity that you have never been, nor are, nor will be estranged from reality, that you are the fulness of perfection here and now and that nothing can deprive you of your heritage, of what you are. You are in no way different from me, only you do not know it. (424) Be fully aware of your own being, and you will be in bliss consciously. Because you take your mind off yourself and make it dwell on what you are not, you lose your sense of well-being, of being well. (96)

You people do not know how much you miss by not knowing your own true self. (213)

The moment you know your real being, you are afraid of nothing. Death gives freedom and power. To be free in the world, you must die to the world. Then the universe is your own, it becomes your body, an expression and a tool. The happiness of being absolutely free is beyond description. (139)

The ordinary man is personally concerned, he counts his risks and chances, while the gnani remains aloof, sure that all will happen as it must; and it does not matter much what happens, for ultimately the return to balance and harmony is inevitable. The heart of things is at peace. (527)

The particular is born and reborn, changing name and shape, the gnani is the Changeless Reality, which makes the changeful possible. The entire universe is his body, all life is his life. As in a city of lights, when one bulb burns out, it does not affect the network, so the death of a body does not affect the whole. With me, all is one, all is equal. (184)

The Guru is basically without desire. He sees what happens, but feels no urge to interfere. He makes no choices, takes no decisions. As pure witness, he watches what is going on and remains unaffected. Victory is always his, in the end. He

knows that if the disciples do not learn from his words, they will learn from their own mistakes. Inwardly he remains quiet and silent. He has no sense of being a separate person. The entire universe is his own, including his disciples with their petty plans. Nothing in particular affects him, or, which comes to the same, the entire universe affects him in equal measure. In reality, the disciple is not different from the Guru. He is the same dimensionless centre of perception and love in action. It is only his imagination that encloses him and converts him into a person. (342)

He [the gnani] is alone, but he is all. He is not even a being. He is the beingness of beings. Not even that. No words apply. He is what he is, the ground from which all grows. (181)

A gnani commands a mode of spontaneous, non-sensory perception, which makes him know things directly, without intermediary of the senses.

He is beyond the perceptual and the conceptual, beyond the categories of time and space, name and shape. He is neither the perceived nor the perceiver, but the simple and the universal factor that makes perceiving possible. (532)

His [the gnani's] state tastes of the pure, uncaused, undiluted bliss. He is happy and fully aware that happiness is his very nature and that he need not do anything, nor strive for anything to secure it. It follows him, more real than the body, nearer than the mind itself. To me, dependence on anything for happiness is utter misery. Pleasure and pain have causes, while my state is my own, totally uncaused, independent, unassailable. (179)

As he [the gnani] gets older, he grows more and more happy and peaceful. After all, he is going home. Like a traveller nearing his destination and collecting his luggage, he leaves the train without regret. The reel of destiny is coming to its end - the mind is happy. The mist of bodily existence is lifting - the burden of the body is growing less from day to day. (180)

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