

Nonduality Salon Presents

ASMI

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

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Miscellaneous

Why the ignorance and the illusion? What is the purpose of it all?

* Why the ignorance and the illusion? *

There is nothing like ignorance, only inattention. After all, worry is a mental pain and pain is invariably a call for attention. The moment you give attention, the call for it ceases and the question of ignorance dissolves. Attention brings you back to the present, the now, and the presence in the now is a state ever at hand, but rarely notice. (482)

Neither ignorance nor illusion ever happened to you. Find the self to which you ascribe ignorance and illusion and your question will be answered. You talk as if you know the self and see it to be under the sway of ignorance and illusion. But, in fact, you do not know the self, nor are you aware of ignorance. By all means, become aware, this will bring you to the self and you will realize that there is neither ignorance nor delusion in it. It is like saying: if there is sun, how can darkness be? As under a stone there will be darkness, however strong the sunlight, so in the shadow of the "I-am-the-body" consciousness there must be ignorance and illusion. Don't ask 'why' and 'how'. It is in the nature of creative imagination to identify itself with its creations. You can stop it any moment by switching off attention. Or through investigation. (344)

You have not forgotten [what you really are]. It is in the picture on the screen that you forget and then remember. You never cease to be a man because you dream to be a tiger. Similarly you are pure light appearing as a picture on the screen and also becoming one with it. (481)

* What is the purpose of it all? *

It is the instinct of exploration, the love of the unknown, that brings me into existence. It is in the nature of being to seek adventure in becoming, as it is in the nature of becoming to seek peace in being. This alternation of being and becoming is inevitable; but my home is beyond. (417)

The world is but a show, glittering and empty. It is, and yet it is not. It is there as long as I want to see it and take part in it. When I cease caring, it dissolves. It has no cause and serves no purpose. It just happens when we are absent-minded. It appears exactly as it looks, but there is no depth in it, nor meaning. Only the onlooker is real, call him Self or Atma. To the Self, the world is but a colourful show, which he enjoys as long as it lasts and forgets when it is over. Whatever happens on the stage makes him shudder in terror or roll with laughter, yet all the time he is aware that it is but a show. Without desire or fear, he enjoys it, as it happens. (178-9)

The spirit is a sport and enjoys to overcome obstacles. The harder the task, the deeper and wider his self-realization. (480)

The ultimate value of the body is that it serves to discover the cosmic body, which is the universe in its entirety. As you realize yourself in manifestation, you keep on discovering that you are ever more than what you have imagined. (274)

All that lives, works for protecting, perpetuating and expanding consciousness. This is the world's sole meaning and purpose. (275)

Violence, Evil, Sin.

Was there ever a world without troubles? Your being as a person depends on violence to others. Your very body is a battlefield, full of the dead and dying. Existence implies violence. There is little of non-violence in nature. Do you realize that, as long as you have a self to defend, you must be violent? (507)

Punishment is but legalized crime. In a society built on prevention, rather than retaliation, there would be very little crime. The few exceptions will be treated medically, as an

unsound mind and body. (512)

Pain and pleasure, good and bad, right and wrong: these are relative terms and must not be taken absolutely. They are limited and temporary. (264)

There is no evil, there is no suffering; the joy of living is paramount. Look, how everything clings to life, how dear the existence is. (384)

Evil is the shadow of inattention. In the light of self-awareness it will wither and fall off. (510)

The universe is perfect as a whole, and the part's striving for perfection is a way of joy. Willingly sacrifice the imperfect to the perfect, and there will be no more talk about good and evil. (284)

There is no good and no evil. In every concrete situation, there is only the necessary and the unnecessary. The needful is right, the needless is wrong. In my world, even what you call evil is the servant of the good and therefore necessary. It is like boils and fever that clear the body of impurities. Disease is painful, even dangerous, but if dealt with rightly, it heals. In some cases death is the best cure. (283-4)

It is in the nature of all manifestation that the good and the bad follow each other and in equal measure. The true refuge is only in the unmanifested. (325)

Relatively, what causes suffering is wrong; what alleviates it is right. Absolutely, what brings you back to reality is right, and what dims reality is wrong. (326)

Stupidity and selfishness are the only evil. (496)

To understand suffering, you must go beyond pain and pleasure. Your own desires and fears prevent you from understanding and thereby helping others. In reality there are no others, and by helping yourself you help everybody else. If you are serious about the suffering of mankind, you must perfect the only means of help you have, yourself. (383)

[Sin is] all that binds you. (534)

In the end you know that there is no sin, no guilt, no

retribution, only life in its endless transformations. With the dissolution of the personal "I", personal suffering disappears. What remains is the great sadness of compassion, the horror of the unnecessary pain. (496)

I do not know bad people, I only know myself. I see no saints nor sinners, only living beings. (503)

I know no sin, nor sinner. Your distinction and valuation do not bind me. Everybody behaves according to his nature. It cannot be helped, nor need it be regretted. (503)

When ignorance, the mother of sin, dissolves, destiny, the compulsion to sin again, ceases. With ignorance coming to an end, all comes to an end. Things are then seen as they are, and they are good. (503)

Progress.

The world had all the time to get better, yet it did not. What hope is there for the future? Of course, there have been and will be periods of harmony and peace, when sattva was in ascendance, but things get destroyed by their own perfection. A perfect society is necessarily static and, therefore, it stagnates and decays. From the summit all roads lead downwards. Societies are like people - they are born, they grow to some point of relative perfection and then decay and die. (419)

Man does not change much over the ages. Human problems remain the same and call for the same answers. (445)

It was the same ten thousand years ago, and will be the same ten thousand years hence. Centuries roll on, but the human problem does not change - the problem of suffering and the ending of suffering. (459)

The world does not yield to changing. By its very nature it is painful and transient. See it as it is and divest yourself of all desire and fear. When the world does not hold and bind you, it becomes an abode of joy and beauty. You can be happy in the world only when you are free of it. (504)

Causes and results are infinite in number and variety. Everything affects everything. In this universe, when one thing changes, everything changes. Hence the great power of man in

changing the world by changing himself. My world has changed completely. Yours remains the same, for you have not changed. [You didn't notice this change] because there was no communion between us. Do not consider yourself as separate from me and we shall at once share in the common state. (490)

Karma.

Karma is only a store of unspent energies, of unfulfilled desires, and fears not understood. The store is being constantly replenished by new desires and fears. It need not be so for ever. Understand the root cause of your fears -estrangement from yourself; and of desires -the longing for the self, and your karma will dissolve like a dream. (411)

Karma, or destiny, is an expression of a beneficial law: the universal trend towards balance, harmony and unity. At every moment, whatever happens now, is for the best. It may appear painful and ugly, a suffering bitter and meaningless, yet considering the past and the future it is for the best, as the only way out of a disastrous situation. (512)

Most of our karma is collective. We suffer for the sins of others, as others suffer for ours. Humanity is one. (465)

Ignorance is like a fever - it makes you see things which are not there. Karma is the divinely prescribed treatment. Welcome it and follow the instructions faithfully, and you will get well. A patient will leave the hospital after he recovers. To insist on immediate freedom of choice or action will merely postpone recovery. Accept your destiny and fulfil it - this is the shortest way to freedom from destiny. (489)

Death, Suicide, Reincarnation.

* Death *

It is in the nature of consciousness to survive its vehicles. It is like fire. It burns up the fuel, but not itself. Just like a fire can outlast a mountain of fuel, so does consciousness survive innumerable bodies. (327)

You make yourself mortal by taking yourself to be the body. (363)

You may die a hundred deaths without a break in the mental turmoil. Or you may keep your body and die only in the mind.

The death of the mind is the birth of wisdom. (362)

I am dead already. Physical death will make no difference in my case. I am timeless being. I am free of desire or fear, because I do not remember the past, or imagine the future. Where there are no names and shapes, how can there be desires and fear? With desirelessness comes timelessness. I am safe, because what is not cannot touch what is. You feel unsafe, because you imagine danger. Of course, your body as such is complex and vulnerable and needs protection. But not you. Once you realize your own unassailable being, you will be at peace. (260)

What is birth and death but the beginning and the ending of a stream of events in consciousness? (147)

[When an ordinary man dies] according to his belief it happens. As life before death is but imagination, so is life after. The dream continues. The gnani does not die because he was never born. (261)

When somebody dies, nothing happens. Something becomes nothing. Nothing was, nothing remains. (91)

Only the dead can die, not the living. That which is alive in you is immortal. (407)

It is the changing that dies. The immutable neither lives nor dies; it is the timeless witness of life and death. You cannot call it dead, for it is aware. Nor can you call it alive, for it does not change. (433)

Nothing dies. The body is just imagined. There is no such thing. (361)

In reality there is no killing and no dying. The real does not die, the unreal never lived. (234)

I am told I was born. I do not remember. I am told I shall die. I do not expect it. You tell me I have forgotten or I lack imagination. But I just cannot remember what never happened, nor expect the patently impossible. Bodies are born and bodies die, but what is it to me? Bodies come and go in consciousness, and consciousness itself has its roots in me. I am life, and mine are mind and body. (94)

You can't help surviving! The real you is timeless and beyond birth and death. And the body will survive as long as it is needed. It is not important that it should live long. A full life is better than a long life. (315)

Misery is to be born, not to die. (181)

I do not look at death as a calamity, as I do not rejoice a the birth of a child. The child is out for trouble, while the dead is out of it. Attachment to life is attachment to sorrow. We love what gives pain. Such is our nature. (418)

In some cases death is the best cure. A life may be worse than death, which is but rarely an unpleasant experience, whatever the appearances. (283-4)

The more you know yourself, the less you are afraid [of dying]. Of course, the agony of dying is never pleasant to look at, but the dying man is rarely conscious. (469)

It [dying] needn't be so [painful and ugly]. It may be beautiful and peaceful. Once you know that death happens to the body and not to you, you just watch your body falling off like a discarded garment. Once you know that the body alone dies and not the continuity of memory and the sense of "I am" reflected in it, you are afraid no longer. (464-5)

To be a living being is not the ultimate state; there is something beyond, much more wonderful, which is neither being nor non-being, neither living nor not-living. It is a state of pure awareness, beyond the limitations of space and time. Once the illusion that the body-mind is oneself is abandoned, death loses its terror, it becomes a part of living. (122)

One who believes himself as having been born is very much afraid of death. On the other hand, to him who knows himself truly, death is a happy event. (383)

[If I heard that you had died,] I would be very happy to have you back home. Really glad to see you out of this foolishness, of thinking that you were born and will die, that you are a body displaying a mind and all such nonsense. In my world, nobody is born and nobody dies. Some people go on a journey and come back, some never leave. What difference does it make since they travel in dreamlands, each wrapped up in his own dream. Only the waking is important. It is enough to know the

"I am" as reality and also love. (182)

* Suicide *

Nothing wrong [with suicide], if it solves the problem. What if it does not? Suffering caused by extraneous factors -some painful and incurable disease, or unbearable calamity- may provide some justification, but where wisdom and compassion are lacking, suicide cannot help. A foolish death means foolishness reborn. Besides there is the question of karma to consider. Endurance is usually the wisest course. (464)

Nobody can compel another to live. Besides, there were cultures in which suicide had its acknowledged and respected place. There is noble virtue in unshakable endurance of whatever comes, but there is also dignity in the refusal of meaningless torture and humiliation. (471)

* Reincarnation ? *

One does not become a disciple by conversion, or by accident. There is usually an ancient link, maintained through many lives and flowering as love and trust. (460)

The memory of the past unfulfilled desires traps energy, which manifests itself as a person. When its charge gets exhausted, the person dies. Unfulfilled desires are carried over into the next birth. I do not say that the same person is reborn. It dies and dies for good. But its memories remain and their desires and fears. They supply the energy for a new person. The real takes no part in it, but makes it possible by giving it the light. (381)

There is no compulsion [to be reborn]. You get what you want. You make your own plans and you carry them out. We grow through investigation, and to investigate we need experience. We tend to repeat what we have not understood. (465)

It [death] is very much like sleep. For a time, the person is out of focus and then it returns. The person, being a creature of circumstances, necessarily changes along with them, like the flame that changes with the fuel. Only the process goes on and on, creating time and space. (469)

You may believe in whatever you like [about reincarnation] and, if you act on your belief, you will get the fruits of it. But

for me it has no importance. I am what I am, and this is enough for me. I have no desire to identify myself with anybody, however illustrious. Nor do I feel the need to take myths for reality. (505)

The question of resistance [to reincarnation] does not arise. What is born and reborn is not you. Let it happen, watch it happen. (469)

Reincarnation implies a reincarnating self. There is no such thing. The bundle of memories and hopes, called the "I", imagines itself existing everlastingly and creates time to accommodate its false eternity. To be, I need no past or future. All experience is born of imagination; I do not imagine, so no birth or death happens to me. Only those who think themselves born can think themselves re-born. All exists in awareness, and awareness neither dies nor is re-born. It is the changeless reality itself. (262)

When the body is no more, the person disappears completely without return, only the witness remains and the Great Unknown. (400)

Religions.

What is religion? A cloud in the sky. I live in the sky, not in the clouds, which are so many words held together. Remove the verbiage and what remains? Truth remains. (512)

Christianity is one way of putting words together and Hinduism is another. The real is, behind and beyond words, incommunicable, directly experienced, explosive in its effect on the mind. It is easily had when nothing else is wanted. The unreal is created by imagination and perpetuated by desire. (512)

Recorded religions are mere heaps of verbiage. Religions show their true face in action, in silent action. To know what a man believes, watch how he acts. For most of the people, service of their bodies and their minds is their religion. They may have religious ideas, but they do not act on them. (513)

Until you are free of the drug [of self-identification], all your religions and sciences, prayers and yogas are of no use to you, for, based on a mistake, they strengthen it. (443-4)

God.

Where there is a universe, there will also be its counterpart, which is God. But I am beyond both. (264)

God attends to this business of managing the universe; but he is glad to have some help. When the helper is selfless and intelligent, all the powers of the universe are for him to command. (385)

Consciousness arising, the world arises. When you consider the wisdom and the beauty of the world, you call it God. Know the source of it all, which is in yourself, and you will find all your questions answered. (266)

God is the totality of consciousness, but awareness is beyond all - being as well as not-being. (263)

I cannot say that I am in God or I am God; God is the universal light and love, the universal witness: I am beyond the universal even. (320)

Without you as the witness there would be neither animal nor God. Understand that you are both, the essence and the surface of all there is. (476)

When you demand nothing of the world, nor of God, when you want nothing, seek nothing, expect nothing, then the Supreme State will come to you uninvited and unexpected. (195)

To love and worship a god is also ignorance. My home is beyond all notions, however sublime. (417)

Even faith in God is only a stage on the way. Ultimately, you abandon all, for you come to something so simple that there are no words to express it. (469-70)

You yourself are God, the Supreme Reality. (240)

You are God, but you do not know it. (533)

How can there be [a God apart from me]? "I am" is the root, God is the tree. (44)

Consciousness and life - both you may call God; but you are beyond both, beyond God, beyond being and not-being. (475)

I cannot say that I am in God or I am God; God is the universal

light and love, the universal witness: I am beyond the universal even. (320)

Get rid of all ideas about yourself, even of the idea that you are God. No self-definition is valid. (195)

The real Guru.

Running after saints is merely another game to play. (457)

The self-styled gurus talk of ripeness and effort, of merits and achievements, of destiny and grace; all these are mere mental formations, projections of an addicted mind. Instead of helping, they obstruct. (422)

Teachers there may be many, fearless disciples very few. (509)

The right disciple will always find the right teacher. (461)

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)

Even if you are quite ignorant of the ways and the means, keep quiet and look within; guidance is sure to come. You are never left without knowing what your next step should be. The trouble is that you may shirk it. The guru is there for giving you courage because of his experience and success. But only what you discover through your own awareness, your own effort, will be of permanent use to you. (510)

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. (342)

The Guru and man's inner reality are really one and work together towards the same goal - the redemption and salvation of the mind. They cannot fail. Out of very boulders that obstruct them they build their bridges. (506)

Who is the Guru, after all? He who knows the state in which there is neither the world nor the thought of it, he is the Supreme Teacher. To find him means to reach the state in which imagination is no longer taken for reality, for truth, for what is. He is a realist in the highest sense of the term. He cannot and shall not come to terms with the mind and its delusions. He comes to take you to the real; don't expect him to do anything else. The Guru you have in mind, one who gives you information and instructions, is not the real Guru. The real Guru is he who knows the real, beyond the glamour of appearances. What exists for you does not exist for him. What you take for granted, he denies absolutely. He wants you to see yourself as he sees you. Then you will not need a Guru to obey and follow, for you will obey and follow your own reality. (215)

The greatest guru is your inner self. Truly, he is the supreme teacher. He alone can take you to your goal and he alone meets you at the end of the road. Confide in him and you need no outer guru. (149)

Your own self is your ultimate teacher (sadguru). The outer teacher (guru) is merely a milestone. It is only your inner teacher that will walk with you to the goal, for it is the goal. (51)

The inner guru is not committed to non-violence. He can be quite violent at times, to the point of destroying the obtuse or perverted personality. Suffering and death, as life and happiness, are his tools of work. It is only in duality that non-violence becomes the unifying law. (373)

Yoga.

Relinquish your habits and addictions, live a simple and sober life, don't hurt a living being; this is the foundation of yoga. (515)

Posture and breathing are a part of yoga, for the body must be healthy and well under control, but too much concentration on the body defeats its own purpose, for it is the mind that is

primary in the beginning. With deep and quiet breathing, vitality will improve, which will influence the brain and help the mind to grow pure and stable and fit for meditation. Without vitality, little can be done, hence the importance of its protection and increase. (496-7)

Yoga is the work of the inner self (vyakta) on the outer self (vyakti). All that the outer does is merely in response to the inner. It [the outer self] has some control over the body and can improve its posture and breathing. Over the mind's thoughts and feelings it has little mastery, for it is itself the mind. It is the inner that can control the outer. The outer will be wise to obey. (74-5)

The cause of suffering is dependence, and independence is the remedy. Yoga is the science and the art of self-liberation through self-understanding. (473)

All that lives, works for protecting, perpetuating and expanding consciousness. This is the world's sole meaning and purpose. It is the very essence of Yoga - ever raising the level of consciousness, discovery of new dimensions, with their properties, qualities and powers. In that sense, the entire universe becomes a school of Yoga. (275)

You can do nothing. What time has brought about, time will take away. This is the end of yoga, to realize independence. All that happens, happens in and to the mind, not to the source of the "I am". (451)

In the mirror of your mind all kinds of pictures appear and disappear. Knowing that they are entirely your own creations, watch them silently come and go. Be alert, but not perturbed. This attitude of silent observation is the very foundation of yoga. You see the picture, but you are no the picture. (469)

The witness usually knows only consciousness. Sadhana consists in the witness turning back first on his conscious, then upon himself in his own awareness. Self-awareness is Yoga. (532)

In each [school of yoga], one can progress up to the point when all desire for progress must be abandoned to make further progress possible. Then all schools are given up, all effort ceases; in solitude and darkness, the last step is made which ends ignorance and fear for ever. (477)

Until you are free of the drug [of self-identification] , all your religions and sciences, prayers and yogas are of no use to you, for, based on a mistake, they strengthen it. But if you stay with the idea that you are not the body nor the mind, not even their witness, but altogether beyond, your mind will grow in clarity, your desires in purity, your actions in charity, and that inner distillation will take you to another world, a world of truth and fearless love. (443-4)

Love.

Were it so [that we love only ourselves], it would be splendid! Love your self wisely and you will reach the summit of perfection. Everybody loves his body, but few love their real being. Your real being is love itself, and your many loves are its reflections according to the situation at the moment. (483)

That which you are, your true self, you love it, and whatever you do, you do for your own happiness. To find it, to know it, to cherish it is your basic urge. Be true to your own self, love your self absolutely. Do not pretend that you love others as yourself. Unless you have realized them as one with yourself, you cannot love them. Don't pretend to be what you are not, don't refuse to be what you are. Your love of others is the result of self-knowledge, not its cause. Without self-realization, no virtue is genuine. When you know beyond all doubting that the same life flows through all that is and you are that life, you will love all naturally and spontaneously. When you realize the depth and fullness of your love of yourself, you know that every living being and the entire universe are included in your affection. But when you look at anything as separate from you, you cannot love it for you are afraid of it. Alienation causes fear, and fear deepens alienation. It is a vicious circle. Only self-realization can break it. (213)

Love is not selective, desire is selective. In love there are no strangers. (511)

Once you are in it [true awareness], you will find that you love what you see, whatever may be its nature. This choiceless love is the touchstone of awareness. If it is not there, you are merely interested, for some personal reasons. (382)

In dream you love some and not others. On waking up you find you are love itself, embracing all. Personal love, however

intense and genuine, invariably binds; love in freedom is love of all. When you are love itself, you are beyond time and numbers. In loving one you love all, in loving all, you love each. (258)

When all the false self-identifications are thrown away, what remains is all-embracing love. (195)

To see myself in everybody, and everybody in myself, most certainly is love. (91)

I find that somehow, by shifting the focus of attention, I become the very thing I look at, and experience the kind of consciousness it has; I become the inner witness of the thing. I call this capacity of entering other focal points of consciousness, love; you may give it any name you like. Love says "I am everything". Wisdom says "I am nothing". Between the two, my life flows. Since at any point of time and space I can be both the subject and the object of experience, I express it by saying that I am both, and neither, and beyond both. (269)

It is enough to know the "I am" as reality and also love. (182)

The Supreme (paramakash) imparts reality to whatever comes into being. To say that it is the universal love may be the nearest we can come to it in words. Just like love, it makes everything real, beautiful, desirable. (303)

Circumstances and conditions rule the ignorant. The knower of reality is not compelled. The only law he obeys is that of love. (484)

To act from desire and fear is bondage, to act from love is freedom. (489)

Nothing can be done without love. (482-3)

The consciousness in you and the consciousness in me, apparently two, really one, seek unity and that is love. (70)

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