

Nonduality Salon Presents

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

compiled and edited by [Miguel-Angel Carrasco](#)

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The Way to Self-Realization: Part Five

*As self-identification with the body-mind
is the poison that brings bondage,
seek liberation by seeing that oneself is not
any thing personal or perceivable.*

*Self-identification with the body-mind is the poison that brings
bondage.*

There is no point in fighting desires and fears which may be perfectly natural and justified; it is the person, who is swayed by them, that is the cause of mistakes, past and future. This person should be carefully examined and its falseness seen; then its power over you will end. After all, it subsides each time you go to sleep. (448)

All your preoccupations with yourself are only during waking hours and partly in your dreams; in sleep all is put aside and forgotten. It shows how little important is your waking life, even to yourself, that merely lying down and closing the eyes can end it. Each time you go to sleep, you do so without the least certainty of waking up and yet you accept the risk. (443-4)

Before you go further you must accept, at least as a working theory, that you are not what you appear to be, that you are under the influence of a drug. Then only will you have the urge and the patience to examine the symptoms and search for their common cause. All that a guru can tell you is: "My dear sir, you are quite mistaken about yourself. You are not the person you think yourself to be." Trust nobody, not even yourself.

Search, find out, remove and reject every assumption till you reach the living waters and the rock of truth. Until you are free of the drug, all your religions and sciences, prayers and yogas are of no use to you, for, based on a mistake, they strengthen it. (443)

Something prevents you from seeing that there is nothing you need. Find it out and see its falseness. It is like having swallowed some poison and suffering from unquenchable craving for water. Instead of drinking beyond all measure, why not eliminate the poison and be free of this burning thirst? The sense "I am a person in time and space" is the poison. In a way, time itself is the poison. In time all things come to an end and new are born, to be devoured in their turn. Do not identify yourself with time, do not ask anxiously "what next, what next?" Step out of time and see it devour the world. Say: "Well, it is in the nature of time to put an end to everything. Let it be. It does not concern me. I am not combustible, nor do I need to collect fuel." (351)

As long as there is the body and the sense of identity with the body, frustration is inevitable. Only when you know yourself as entirely alien to and different from the body, will you find respite from the mixture of fear and craving inseparable from the "I-am-the-body" idea. (480)

All changes in consciousness are due to the "I-am-the-body" idea. Divested of this idea, the mind becomes steady. There is pure being, free of experiencing anything in particular. (346)

You are accustomed to dealing with things, physical and mental. I am not a thing, nor are you. We are neither matter nor energy, neither body nor mind. The way to truth lies through the destruction of the false. To destroy the false, you must question your most inveterate beliefs. Of these, the idea that you are the body is the worst. (302)

While alive, it [the body] attracts attention and fascinates so completely that rarely does one perceive one's real nature. It is like seeing the surface of the ocean and completely forgetting the immensity beneath. (484)

As long as you take yourself to be a person, a body and a mind, separate from the stream of life, having a will of its own, pursuing its own aims, you are living merely on the surface, and whatever you do will be short-lived and of little value,

mere straw to feed the flames of vanity. (492)

When you desire and fear, and identify yourself with your feelings, you create sorrow and bondage. When you create, with love and wisdom, and remain unattached to your creations, the result is harmony and peace. But whatever be the condition of your mind, in what way does it reflect on you? It is only your self-identification with your mind that makes you happy or unhappy. Rebel against your slavery to your mind, see your bonds as self-created and break the chains of attachment and revulsion. Keep in mind your goal of freedom, until it dawns on you that you are already free, that freedom is not something in the distant future to be earned with painful efforts, but perennially one's own, to be used! Liberation is not an acquisition but a matter of courage, the courage to believe that you are free already and to act on it. (518)

We are free 'here and now', It is only the mind that imagines bondage. Once you know your mind and its miraculous powers, and remove what poisoned it -the idea of a separate and isolated person- you just leave it alone to do its work among things for which it is well suited. (456)

Memory is a good servant but a bad master. It effectively prevents discovery. There is no place for effort in reality. It is selfishness, due to self-identification with the body, that is the main problem and the cause of other problems. And selfishness cannot be removed by effort, only by clear insight into its causes and effects. Effort is a sign of conflict between incompatible desires. They should be seen as they are - then only they dissolve. (476)

The body is made of food, as the mind is made of thoughts. See them as they are. Non-identification, when natural and spontaneous, is liberation. (372)

Have your being outside this body of birth and death, and all your problems will be solved. They exist because you believe yourself born to die. Undeceive yourself and be free. You are not a person. (147)

There is no such thing as a person. There are only restrictions and limitations. The sum total of these defines the person. The person merely appears to be, like the space within the pot appears to have the shape and volume and smell of the pot. (204)

As long as we imagine ourselves to be separate personalities, one quite apart from another, we cannot grasp reality, which is essentially impersonal. First we must know ourselves as witnesses only, dimensionless and timeless centres of observation, and then realize that immense ocean of pure awareness, which is both mind and matter and beyond both. (205)

Nothings stops you from being a gnani here and now, except fear. You are afraid of being impersonal, of impersonal being. It is all quite simple. Turn away from your desires and fears and from the thoughts they create and you are at once in your natural state. (349)

[If you are still dreaming] it is because you have not really understood that you are dreaming. This is the essence of bondage - the mixing of the real with the unreal. In your present state, only the sense "I am" refers to reality; the "what" and the "how I am" are illusions imposed by destiny, or accident. (506)

At present, you are moved by the pleasure-pain principle which is the ego. You are going along with the ego, you are not fighting it. You are not even aware how totally you are swayed by personal considerations. A man should be always in revolt against himself, for the ego, like a crooked mirror, narrows down and distorts. It is the worst of all the tyrants, it dominates you absolutely. (444)

The problem arises only when the memory of past pains and pleasures, which are essential to all organic life, remains as a reflex, dominating behaviour. This reflex takes the shape of "I" and uses the body and the mind for its purposes, which are invariably in search for pleasure or flight from pain. When you recognize the "I" as it is, a bundle of desires and fears, and the sense of "mine" as embracing all things and people needed for the purpose of avoiding pain and securing pleasure, you will see that the "I" and the "mine" are false ideas, having no foundation in reality. Created by the mind, they rule their creator as long as it takes them to be true; when questioned, they dissolve. The "I" and "mine", having no existence in themselves, need a support which they find in the body. The body becomes their point of reference. When you talk of "my" husband and "my children", you mean the body's husband and the body's children. Give up the idea of being the body and

face the question: Who am I? At once a process will be set in motion which will bring back reality, or rather, will take mind to reality. (386)

It is the person you imagine yourself to be that suffers, not you. Dissolve it in awareness. It is merely a bundle of memories and habits. From the awareness of the unreal to the awareness of your real nature there is a chasm which you will easily cross, once you have mastered the art of pure awareness. (517)

You are not what you think yourself to be, I assure you. The image you have of yourself is made up from memories and is purely accidental. You have never been, nor shall ever be, a person. Refuse to consider yourself as one. But as long as you do not even doubt yourself to be Mr So-and-so, there is little hope. (339)

Having seen that you are a bundle of memories held together by attachment, step out and look from the outside. You may perceive for the first time something which is not memory. You cease to be Mr-so-and-so, busy about his own affairs. You are at last at peace. You realize that nothing was ever wrong with the world, you alone were wrong and now it is all over. Never again will you be caught in the meshes of desire born of ignorance. (390)

Exactly as a shadow appears when light is intercepted by the body, so does the person arise when pure self-awareness is obstructed by the "I-am-the-body" idea. And as the shadow changes shape and position according to the lay of the land, so does the person appear to rejoice and suffer, rest and toil, find and lose according to the pattern of destiny. When the body is no more, the person disappears completely without return, only the witness remains and the Great Unknown. (400)

It is like washing printed cloth. First the design fades, then the background, and in the end the cloth is plain white. The personality gives place to the witness, then the witness goes and pure awareness remains. The cloth was white in the beginning and is white in the end; the patterns and colours just happened - for a time. (401)

Seek liberation by seeing that oneself is not any thing personal or perceivable.

Understand first that you are not the person you believe yourself to be. What you think yourself to be is mere suggestion or imagination. You have no parents, you were not born, nor will you die. Either trust me when I tell you so, or arrive to it by study and investigation. The way of total faith is quick, the other is slow but steady. (399)

I ask you only to stop imagining that you were born, have parents, are a body, will die and so on. Just try, make a beginning -it is not as hard as you think. (71)

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. First you create a world, then the "I am" becomes a person, who is not happy for various reasons. He goes out in search of happiness, meets a guru who tells him: "You are not a person, find who you are". He does it and goes beyond. (344)

Discover all you are not. Body, feelings, thoughts, ideas, time, space, being and not-being this or that -nothing concrete or abstract you can point out to is you. A mere verbal statement will not do -you may repeat a formula endlessly without any result whatsoever. You must watch yourself continuously -particularly your mind - moment by moment, missing nothing. This witnessing is essential for the separation of the self from the not-self. (27)

To know that you are neither body nor mind, watch yourself steadily and live unaffected by your body and mind, completely aloof, as if you were dead. It means you have no vested interests, either in the body or in the mind. Just remain unaffected. This complete aloofness, unconcern with mind and body is the best proof that at the core of your being you are neither mind nor body. What happens to the body and the mind may not be within your power to change, but you can always put an end to your imagining yourself to be body and mind. Whatever happens, remind yourself that only your body and mind are affected, not yourself. (210)

You can do what you like, as long as you do not take yourself to be the body and the mind. It is not so much a question of actual giving up the body and all that goes with it, as a clear understanding that you are not the body, a sense of aloofness, of emotional non-involvement. (467)

It is enough if you do not imagine yourself to be the body. It is the "I am the body" idea that is so calamitous. It blinds you completely to your real nature. Even for a moment do not think that you are the body. Give yourself no name, no shape. In the the darkness and the silence reality is found. (305)

Both faith and reason tell you that you are neither the body, nor its desires and fears, nor are you the mind with its fanciful ideas, nor the role society compels you to play, the person you are supposed to be. Give up the false and the true will come into its own. (517)

Wet cloth looks, feels, smells differently as long as it is wet. When dry it is again the normal cloth. Water has left it and who can make out that it was wet? Your real nature is not like what you appear to be. Give up the idea of being a person, that is all. You need not become what you are anyhow. (442)

First of all, abandon all self-identification, stop thinking of yourself as such-and-such, so-and-so, this or that. Abandon all self-concern, worry not about your welfare, material or spiritual. Abandon any desire, gross or subtle, stop thinking of achievement of any kind. You are complete here and now, you need absolutely nothing. (316)

There is nothing wrong with you as the Self. It is what it is to perfection. It is the mirror that is not clear and true and, therefore, gives you false images. You need not correct yourself - only set right your idea of yourself. Learn to separate yourself from the image and the mirror, keep on remembering: I am neither the mind nor its ideas. Do it patiently and with conviction and you will surely come to the direct vision of yourself as the source of being-knowing-loving, eternal, all-embracing, all-pervading. You are the infinite focused in a body. Now you see the body only. Try earnestly and you will come to see the infinite only. (330)

Remember to remember that the perceived cannot be the perceiver. Whatever you see, hear or think of, remember - you are not what happens, you are he to whom it happens. (519)

See that you are not what you believe yourself to be. Fight with all the strength at your disposal against the idea that you are nameable and describable. You are not. Refuse to think of yourself in terms of this or that. (204)

In deep sleep you are not a self-conscious person, yet you are alive. When you are alive and conscious, but no longer self-conscious, you are not a person any more. During the waking hours you are, as if on the stage, playing a role, but what are you when the play is over? You are what you are; what you were before the play began you remain when it is over. Look at yourself as performing on the stage of life. The performance may be splendid or clumsy, but you are not in it, you merely watch it; with interest and sympathy, of course, but keeping in mind all the time that you are only watching while the play -life- is going on. (448)

Just see the person you imagine yourself to be as a part of the world you perceive within your mind, and look at the mind from the outside, for you are not the mind. After all, your only problem is the eager self-identification with whatever you perceive. Give up this habit, remember that you are not what you perceive, use your power of alert aloofness. See yourself in all that lives and your behaviour will express your vision. Once you realize that there is nothing in this world which you can call your own, you look at it from the outside, as you look at a play on the stage, or a picture on the screen, admiring and enjoying, but really unmoved. As long as you imagine yourself to be something tangible and solid, a thing among things, actually existing in time and space, shortlived and vulnerable, naturally you will be anxious to survive and increase. But when you know yourself as beyond space and time, in contact with them only at the point of here and now, otherwise all-pervading and all-containing, unapproachable, unassailable, invulnerable, you will be afraid no longer. (485)

There are no conditions to fulfil. There is nothing to be done, nothing to be given up. Just look and remember, whatever you perceive is not you, nor yours. It is there in the field of consciousness, but you are not the field and its contents, not even the knower of the field. It is your idea that you have to do things that entangle you in the results of your efforts - the motive, the desire, the failure to achieve, the sense of frustration - all this holds you back. Simply look at whatever happens and know that you are beyond it. (148)

Once you have understood that nothing perceivable, or conceivable, can be yourself, you are free of your imaginations. To see everything as imagination, born of desire, is necessary for self-realization. We miss the real by lack of

attention, and create the unreal by excess of imagination. (489)

You are your self - you cannot be anything but what you are. Is knowing separate from being? Whatever you can know with your mind is of the mind, not you; about yourself you can only say: "I am, I am aware, I like it". (517)

Freedom is from something. What are you to be free from? Obviously, you must be free from the person you take yourself to be, for it is the idea you have of yourself that keeps you in bondage. (441)

As long as you have all sorts of ideas about yourself, you know yourself through the mist of these ideas; to know yourself as you are, give up all ideas. You cannot imagine the taste of pure water, you can only discover it by abandoning all flavourings. (509)

You need not get at it, you are it. It will get at you, if you give it a chance. Let go your attachment to the unreal and the real will swiftly and smoothly step into its own. Stop imagining yourself being or doing this or that, and the realization that you are the source and heart of all will dawn upon you. (3)

Disregard whatever you think yourself to be and act as if you were absolutely perfect - whatever your idea of perfection may be. (419)

You are already perfect, here and now. The perfectible is not you. You imagine yourself to be what you are not. Stop it. It is the cessation that is important, not what you are going to stop. (339)

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

To be, you must be nobody. To think yourself to be something, or somebody, is death and hell. (371)

You know that you are. Don't burden yourself with names, just be. Any name or shape you give yourself obscures your real nature. (196)

Go back to that state of pure being where the "I am" is still in its purity before it got contaminated with "this I am" or "that I am". Your burden is of false-identifications - abandon them

all. (239)

Anything you do for the sake of enlightenment takes you nearer. Anything you do without remembering enlightenment puts you off. But why complicate? Just know that you are above and beyond all things and thoughts. What you want to be, you are it already. Just keep it mind. (185)

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. Resist your old habits of feeling and thinking; keep on telling yourself: "No, not so, it cannot be so; I am not like this, I do not need it, I do not want it", and a day will surely come when the entire structure of error and despair will collapse and the ground will be free for a new life. (443)

When you are bound by the illusion "I am this body", you are merely a point in space and a moment in time. When the self-identification with the body is no more, all space and time are in your mind, which is a mere ripple in consciousness, which is awareness reflected in nature. (483)

The "here" is everywhere, and the now always. Go beyond the "I-am-the-body" idea and you will find that space and time are in you and not you in space and time. Once you have understood this, the main obstacle to realization is removed. (476)

Once you realize that the person is merely a shadow of the reality, but not reality itself, you cease to fret and worry. You agree to be guided from within and life becomes a journey into the unknown. (33)

Your loss is your gain. When the shadow is seen to be a shadow only, you stop following it. You turn round and discover the sun which was there all the time - behind your back! (374-5)

[Once the person is eliminated] nothing will remain, all will remain. The sense of identity will remain, but no longer identification with a particular body. Being-awareness-love will shine in full splendour. Liberation is never of the person, it is always from the person. A vague memory [of the person]

remains, like the memory of a dream, or early childhood. After all, what is there to remember? A flow of events, mostly accidental and meaningless. Is there anything worth remembering? The person is but a shell imprisoning you. Break the shell. (343)

The dissolution of personality is followed always by a sense of great relief, as if a heavy burden has fallen off. (401)

Every existence is my existence, every consciousness is my consciousness, every sorrow is my sorrow and every joy is my joy - this is universal life. Yet, my real being, and yours too, is beyond the universe and, therefore, beyond the categories of the particular and the universal. It is what it is, totally self-contained and independent. (318)

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