

NOTHING
IS
EVERYTHING

THE QUINTESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF
SRI NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ

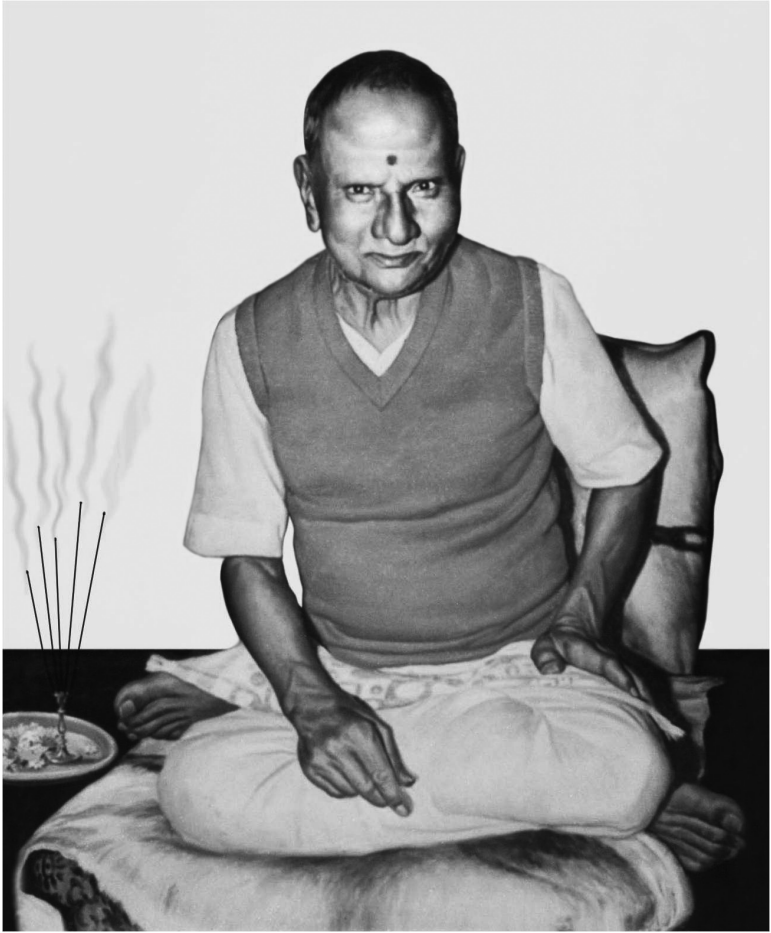
MOHAN GAITONDE

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SRI NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ

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Nothing is Everything

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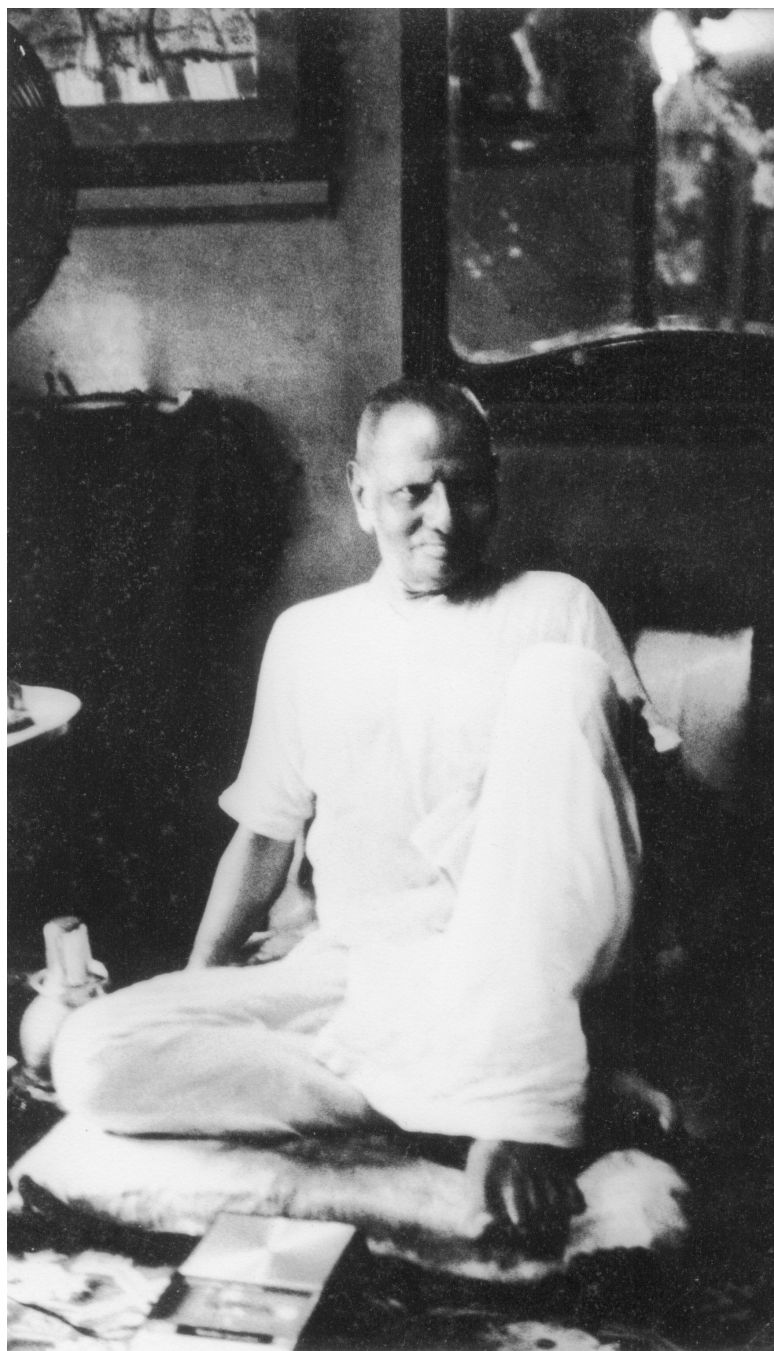
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



I will be failing in my duties if I do not mention the sole person who was responsible for my meeting Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj. My eldest sister late Smt. Sunanda Ramachandra Prabhu was responsible for taking me to Maharaj, in spite of my trying to avoid it for a couple of years. She made me read His writings to change my reluctance to meet Him. Finally, she had to hold my hand, like a child, and take me to Him. With my first meeting with Maharaj her job was over, as in our first meeting itself, the separation of ages dissolved.

I dedicate this book to Smt. Sunanda, without whose efforts, my life would have lost all its meaning and purpose.

MOHAN GAITONDE



TRANSLATOR'S NOTE



I was very fortunate to have *satsang* of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj for five years. During 1978-81, I was a translator during evening talks, from 5pm to 6.30 pm everyday.

Maharaj did not expect us to interpret His replies to specific questions from visitors. He insisted on our literal translations without omitting any words. He said, “When a question is asked, the replies come from *Nirvikalpa* (a state free of ideation). The replies will have proper impact on the questioner, only if there is literal translation of these (Maharaj’s) words. Maharaj was very strict in this matter.

For Maharaj, every visitor was the same as He was. He wondered to see the havoc played by mere imagination and concepts. Just as one would like to wake up anybody troubled by dreams, Maharaj showed deep and earnest efforts to blast concepts for real awakening. All spiritual seekers appreciated His relentless passion for sharing His Real understanding.

Unlike morning sessions, in the evenings there were less questions from visitors. Perhaps, visitors took rest in the evenings and enjoyed hearing Maharaj speaking on His own. After beginning the talks, Maharaj used to invite questions, in case of any doubts. The new comers, if any, would begin with their questions.

When Maharaj talked for a long time, say five minutes or more at a stretch, it was difficult to translate every word in His presence. The same talks are now available on the cassette for word to word translation, without missing anything. In the books edited by the American writers, there is total reliance on the English translations, which are incomplete. Readers may find this translation interesting and useful.

We cannot expect a new skeptical reader to accept this material unconditionally; but if it helps to provoke his serious thoughts, it would be a major achievement.

There are many repetitions in this book, which have been retained, as they are needed for awakening from the deep slumber of ignorance.

Maharaj warned His disciples not to be content with mere knowledge of words, which enabled them to be prominent in spiritual discussions. Almost every day He emphasized the importance of meditation on “I Am” without words, which was a self-revealing process, leading to Self-knowledge.

The content of this book is from the recordings of the conversations in the evenings only. These talks were not recorded with an idea to write a book. The main idea for the recordings, was to have a continued *satsang* of Maharaj, even after His *Maha Samadhi*. That purpose has served so far and will continue till end.

Even after reading almost all the books on Maharaj’s talks published so far, I find some portion of these evening recordings absolutely new and ever fresh for all spiritual readers. Hence, this new publication.

I thank Dr. N.Vanaja for arranging for a tape recorder to record these talks and my wife Jayashri for operating the machine economically, every evening.

MOHAN GAITONDE

INTRODUCTION



It is truly an honor to be asked by Mohan and Jayashree Gaitonde, (Maharaj's evening translators) to write an introduction to these recorded dialogues of *Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj* entitled '*Nothing is Everything*'.

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj paraphrased: Stay at the brink, the space where beingness becomes no-being and no-being becomes being.

As with all of Maharaj's disciples I have ever met, words fail to describe their reverence, devotion and gratitude to their beloved Guru Nisargadatta Maharaj.

For almost 35 years the impact of "His" teachings have flooded and continue to overwhelm "my illusory existence" with their directness, precision, and ability to both point to, and describe **THAT** which is indescribable in words.

As a Guru and spiritual mentor *Nisargadatta Maharaj* changed and shaped the entire course of everyone he touched. I must admit quite frankly, that upon meeting him I had not suspected nor could I even imagine the extraordinary impact, the time I spent with Him, would catalyze and bring about. To paraphrase Maharaj:

The words of a realized man cannot go to waste, they are like seeds, they will wait to the proper time to sprout, but once implanted they will bear their fruit.

In writing an Introduction to Maharaj’s teachings, I am reminded of Jean Dunn, (one of Maharaj’s closest Western disciples), when she remarked:

“Every sentence Maharaj spoke was like an Upanishad”.

Before I proceed with an attempt to describe Maharaj’s teaching “style” and his teachings in a brief and concise manner, first let me relate an interaction I had with him. Hopefully this dialogue might help to provide a window into who He really was, where He was coming from, and the teachings which appeared “through Him”.

To begin with I, like most others, took Maharaj to be a person an “enlightened” being, and hence treated him and saw him as such.

I soon came to appreciate Maharaj was neither a person nor an “enlightened” being.

To illustrate, one day in the late 1970’s I asked Him a question.

Maharaj replied, (Very Intensely!!!):

“You think you are a person so you think Maharaj is a person. You think you are an entity or a deity and so you think Maharaj is an entity or a deity. Maharaj is not a person or an entity or a deity.

Maharaj is Cosmic Consciousness!

I can only say that this “experience” shifted “my consciousness” and enabled me to grasp what was appearing to occur. Appreciating that Maharaj was not a person, an entity or a deity, but ***Cosmic Consciousness itself*** might help to illuminate the teachings and teacher that appeared to occur in this little room on Khetwadi near Grant Road in Bombay,

(Mumbai) for close to 45 years.

Nisargadatta Maharaj, paraphrased: You think I am a person and you are a person conversing with each other. Actually there is only consciousness.

THE UNIQUENESS OF MAHARAJ

The question was what had made Nisargadatta Maharaj so different from any other Guru or teacher I had ever encountered?

To begin with, in my initial meeting with him I actually could not find him in the room. Why? Because with all the Guru's I had met the "energy" seemed to pour from a specific point in the space-time. With Maharaj there was an enormous amount of "energy", a magnetic power which drew me to His presence, but the "energy" did not feel like it came off or from Him personally. Moreover He looked so ordinary. He was dressed not in white robes with a long beard or all in orange with a shaved head. Rather, He dressed and looked like everyone else in His neighborhood. Without drawing attention to his person, (as He often said, "You are not a person", or "there is no person") "He" was just sitting on the floor smoking a *beedi*, (thin Indian cigarette rolled in a *tendu* leaf). There was no spiritual game, no pretense, no hierarchy, no organization and absolutely no game at all.

He once said,

"I am not here to accumulate students."

Paradoxically the overall effect was that of being drawn magnetically to "Him". His "way of being", (*bhaav*) left me in awe with a deep sense of reverence as I tried to "take in" and absorb every word He said.

Another thing that made Maharaj so unique was that “He” never asked anything from me, wanted anything from me, and in a word, He never **needed** anything from me. He was totally student, devotee or disciple centered, not Guru centered. Nor did He try to get me to fit into any model, role, or belief system. It was because of all this that He was totally trustworthy as I knew He was always “*on my side*”.

Another unique aspect of Maharaj was that He reignited kindling my initial understanding of “spirituality”, as “**Finding out who you are**”. And although that was always at the core of my wishes and understanding, I had been sidetracked into believing in cultural and spiritual mythologies and seduced into believing in the “spiritual game”. Subtly that had lead me away from “*Finding out who I am*”, and “*going in*”, and got me more into “*fitting in*”.

Another aspect of Maharaj was His extraordinary directness, and confrontational teaching style. Because Maharaj did not need or want anything from you, nor did He need you to come back to start a center or be part of an organization with a mission, He was free to be direct and blunt. His teaching style was so direct that often times the “pain” (as he confronted my most sacred unquestioned concepts) was overwhelming, **but** simultaneously extraordinarily clarifying, emptying, freeing and in a word **liberating**.

If you asked a question you either got a clear and direct answer, or I got a question; “**An Enquiry Question**” which drove me “deeper”. His questioning my question pointing and focusing with a Zen Koan type of lazer beam which both absorbed my attention and deconstructed my concepts.

Nisargadatta Maharaj: “This faith in the “I Am”, on what does it depend... this faith and belief that you are, on what does it depend upon?”

With such intense focus the enquiry He had proposed if “taken in” and contemplated not only dissolved the question but the answer was revealed from “within”. More strikingly soon the question, the answer, and the “I” you thought you were who had asked the question in the first place had dissolved into nothingness.

“My words if implanted in you will destroy all other words and concepts.” Nisargadatta Maharaj

As an aside, I had had a misconception having been with many Gurus in the past. I had mistakenly fantasized that if you were “Realized” that somehow you could “teach”, convey and transmit teachings. I came to understand that this was not true. I recognized there was no correlation between “Realization” and the ability to teach. What was so extraordinary and liberating was that Maharaj had both the ability to teach and ‘Realization’, which I soon learned, was very rare.

This happening-teaching was overwhelmingly powerful. Maharaj met each student, “where they were”. Like a true “Teaching Master” letting go of His cultural metaphors He translated His cultural metaphors and pointers to fit the person asking the question. For a Westerner this made the transmission of teachings seamless and an ecstatic experience as it was like light bulbs going off “inside” as the concepts held so dear fell away and the empty-ness-fullness was revealed.

Then with great “force of intention” He got seekers to move beyond and let go of their concepts of who and what they were. In this way the intensity of His answers and enquiry focused questions dislodged us from any state we were in, or imagined we were in.

The wonder of Maharaj was that it was this combination

of “Realization, and ability to teach which pointed directly to whatever “path” or “portal” that was a perfect fit for “you”, which would unlock “your” door. In other words many teachers presented a one-size-fits-all spiritual practice, (*sadhana*) or prescription or formula which was the same for each student or devotee. Somehow, Maharaj gave answers that were tailor-made to the questioner. And, it was precisely because He did not need or want anything from you that His directness, clarity and integrity went into you like a virus dismantling your concepts as well as the “I” which believed it had concepts.

“I want to blast all your concepts and put you in the no concept state.” – Nisargadatta Maharaj

THE TEACHINGS

The teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj were from a distance quite simple.

The very very brief overall context was:

Advaita, (Sanskrit for not two, or, one substance not two).
Ultimately of course there was not one.

and

Vedanta, (*Neti Neti*, Sanskrit for Not this, Not this). Discard everything (termed in Sanskrit *nama-rupa*, names and forms) as Not this, Not this.)

This was the genral context along with:

Find out, who you are?

Stay in the I Am, let go of everything else, or hold onto the I Am and let go of everything else.

Anything you think you are, you are not.

Nisargadatta Maharaj paraphrased: In order to find out who you are, you must first find out who you are not.

BEYOND THE I AM

When a student asked Maharaj, “Who are you?”, Maharaj replied, “*Nothing perceivable or conceivable.*”

In other words if you can perceive it or conceive it, it was not you, therefore discard it.

For those who were there to understand and gather more “spiritual” information, (spiritual concepts) he said,

“If you can forget it or remember it, it is not you therefore discard it.”

Simply stated, discard all perceivable and conceivable as *Not this, Not this.*

And

“Stay in the consciousness as a portal to the Absolute”.

At first blush this seemed simple. Metaphorically like peeling an onion until nothing is left as the mind begins to unpack itself. Or, like pulling a string and thread in a ball of yarn. By finding the organizing string and pulling it, the ball of yarn would unravel. In the same way Maharaj would direct “your” attention to “your” concepts or state “you” were in and thereby bring about the unravelling of the mind and its most cherished concepts, (*and believe me Maharaj knew how to pull your string!!!*).

THE ABSOLUTE

What made Maharaj even more unique was that he spoke of the **Absolute**, a state prior to the *I Am* and *consciousness*, and, that basically the *I Am* and *consciousness* was not it, ergo His on-going statement which He repeated again and again and again:

“Prior to Consciousness”.

“This “understanding was far beyond anything I had heard or read about at that time.

(Admittedly Prior to Consciousness was not clear to me in the 1970’s. But much later to realize you can only see and understand through or with the state of consciousness you imagine you are in or are at. In other words it is the lens formed by concepts through which an “I” imagines it is seeing or understanding. The imaginary “I” can only see and understand through that imaginary lens of ideas, i.e. thoughts, memory, emotions, associations, perceptions etc. In this way the “I” (the illusion of there being an “I”) can only see its own illusions. For this reason the illusory “I” can only appreciate Maharaj from who and what it imagined it was, and therefore who or what the “I” imagined Maharaj was.

Simply put it I say the word emptiness, one might imagine or have a picture or experience of emptiness like outer space BUT the picture of emptiness or space is not the thing it represents. In short Maharaj was beyond anything “I” could perceive or conceive. On my last visit to Mumbai in 2007 one of Maharaj’s long time disciples said, “How could we understand Him, He was way beyond us.”

Nisargadatta Maharaj: “Everything you understand, you can only understand through your concepts.”

To reiterate once again Maharaj’s teaching style was uncompromising, relentless, persistent, and tenacious. He stayed on point, never distracted, hammering home that all perceivables and conceivables were dependent on the belief that You Are or I Am. Ultimately upon the I Am dissolving naturally, as Maharaj said, “You Are not”. In this way, there was an appearance of questions being answered, but who was answering the questions?

Nisargadatta Maharaj: “In the absolute state I do not even know that I am.”

These interactions with Him were so monumental that even today their directness remain indescribable leaving me breathless, empty and in awe. As you can imagine it is very difficult to summarize His teaching style and teachings in such a short introduction.

So I hope you appreciate this is only a little attempt. “My” interpretation. A tip of the iceberg, a view, a window, written from just one of His disciples. This offering is merely a slice, a tiny description into an unparalleled voice of **Nisargadatta Maharaj, a Voice of That Which Isn’t.**

Maybe the best way to conclude is to recall a time when He began pacing and shouting at me:

*“There is no birth
There is no death
There is no person
It’s all a concept
It’s all an illusion!!!!*

As He directed this powerful energetic focus at me, “light” passed from His hand and through “me”.

The memory of that day remains with me more than 33

years later.

May these teachings find a home in your heart.

With reverence and love for my

Guru Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Pranams

Nisargadatta Maharaj Ki Jai!

July 11, 2012

STEPHEN H. WOLINSKY

Aptos, California



FOREWORD



Jai Guru...

This book is a live *satsang* with Satguru Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj. And why will it not be when Maharaj's evening translator Mr Mohan Gaitonde who had the privilege of being with Maharaj from 1979 to 1981 has transcribed these rare and unpublished conversations with Sri Nisargadatta through this book. This book has special importance in the sense that Mr Gaitonde being well-versed with Marathi, the language Maharaj spoke, makes it easier for the reader to uncover the real meaning of Maharaj's words of wisdom. And beloved Guru-brother Dr Stephen Wolinsky, who too had the opportunity of *satsang* with Maharaj, has kindly shared his introduction to Maharaj's teachings for the benefit of the next generation of seekers of Truth.

It has been my privilege to interact with both Mr Gaitonde and Dr Wolinsky and I thank Mr Mohan and Mrs Jayashree Gaitonde for offering me an opportunity to write this foreword. It is my pleasure to share my gratitude for Satguru Nisargadatta Maharaj through this foreword.

Satguru's words have the potency to awaken and eradicate the disease permanently; if pondered upon, ruminated upon.

Nisargadatta Maharaj says, “For the earnest seeker, liberation is possible just by listening to this knowledge.” And that is what happened with Nisargadatta Maharaj too after meeting his Guru Sri *Siddharameshwar* Maharaj in 1933.

All those who have already arrived HOME, would certainly not be reading this book. As someone without a disease is most unlikely to visit the doctor for treatment and someone who has already graduated is less likely to apply for school admission.

This book is for all those ardent seekers who are in search of the Truth and for those who have been taking medicines from Nisargadatta Maharaj for a longtime. But what is the purpose of any of these medicines? Is it to just accumulate medicines in multitude or is it to get rid off the disease and the medicine forever? When I see or meet people who have been reading Nisargadatta Maharaj’s books for years, taking pride in their ‘loyalty’ towards reading these books, I feel the deepest empathy. For, how long can one keep on taking the medicines? I often feel that some link is missing within the seeker himself.

Through this book, Nisargadatta Maharaj is offering ‘The Ultimate Medicine’ once again, though on a different platter. In my view Nisargadatta has been describing the effects of medicine rather than offering any prescriptions and expects the fervent seeker to intuitively discriminate and realize by continuous reflection and contemplation on it. But the question arises, is mere contemplation over words of highest wisdom self sufficient?

Although we have seen the highest teachings from Nisargadatta Maharaj through various conversations so far, the fact that how did Nisargadatta ‘realize’ in such a short span of three years after meeting his Guru, remains ignored! The path that Nisargadatta travelled still remains in the dark. The wisdom that is revealed through Nisargadatta Maharaj

is not only through his own contemplation but also through His devotion, dedication and surrender towards His Guru and his teachings. Apart from His earnestness and eagerness, His undeniable faith in His Guru remains ignored, which in fact acted as a natural enzyme to digest the wisdom shared by His Guru and in effect realize His Real Self. I am sure a keen seeker will definitely absorb this pointer.

Often, I am surprised to see the presence of confusion and absence of clarity in the seekers, despite being a regular reader of Maharaj's teachings and in spite of the directness of His utterances. I feel the devoted readers can ponder over a couple of things before reading this book. First, 'Who' is Nisargadatta talking to? And 'Who' is reading or listening to Nisargadatta? For Nisargadatta has been saying relentlessly, "I am talking to the consciousness and not to the body-mind." The seeker, who will read this book with this pointer, will definitely be transcended beyond any reading and beyond any need, which is the whole and sole purpose of Maharaj's teaching.

Nothing is Everything. Someone may ask, how is it possible? Isn't everyone wasting time in search of 'something'? Why so? It could be, because each one assumes him/herself as 'somebody'. But it's never about finding something by somebody. In fact one's assumption and conviction that he/she is merely a body, is the primary obstacle in realizing who they are in reality. This very moment is pregnant and ready to deliver Everything, when you are ready to accept Nothing !

Somehow the word 'Nothing' doesn't interest the seeker whereas the word 'Everything' overwhelms him/her. Why is it so? Why is there so much fear for this 'Nothing'? The thought of one's absence, even though momentary, seems to create fear of non-existence although each and everyone enjoys this absence of 'separate self' every night during deep

sleep. The fear of Nothing is fear of death which is in turn the fear of Unknown. The inability to recognize the hidden secret beneath this Nothing, somehow forces the seeker to shut the doors of Ultimate Understanding sans seeker. In short the word Nothing repels and the word Everything attracts him/her, as these apparent contradictions are perceived at their face value. These contradictions do not exist outwardly but rather exist as the inner division in seeker's mind.

May Nisargadatta Maharaj shower blessings on the dedicated seekers in order to gather courage to face the ultimate and divine paradox of Nothing is Everything.

If you are really ready for Nothing, this book is a perfect touchstone. This book which is focussed on Nisargadatta Maharaj's final teachings will surely transcend the seeking into Understanding of who you are by ceasing the seeking forever.

It is such pleasure to present this pristine bouquet of pointers from Satguru Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj to all of you. THAT, the eternal state where, nothing is missing and nothing more is needed. Neither the experience of study nor study of the experience can reveal THAT. THAT is prior and beyond both. The divine light that permanently deletes the notional distance of darkness between you and Your Real Self is Satguru. Nothing can compete with the Grace of Satguru.

Satguru Sharan

With love,

NITIN RAM

Author of 'Self Calling: Self Reminder Meditations'



Seeking or Understanding?

Seeking is based on some reason,
Understanding is without any!

Seeking is with an effort and purpose,
Understanding is spontaneous and effortless!

Understanding is absent in Seeking,
While the 'seeker' is absent in the Understanding!

Seeking consists of seeker, seeking and the sought,
While this trinity is utterly absent in the Understanding!

Search consists of search, searcher and the searched,
Understanding denies the very 'searcher'!

Seeking consists of stages, intervals and may be some practices,
While the Understanding is eternal and despite of them!

Seeking has an aim,
While nature of Understanding is itself aim-less!

Seeking is supported by listening, reading or pondering,
While Understanding is Self-sustaining (Independent)!

Fear of forgetting gathered knowledge prevails in Seeking,
While even the thought of having understood is
absent in Understanding!

Background of Seeking is duality,
While Understanding is groundless Non-Duality!

Seeking is an ever changing state,
Whereas Understanding, a 'stateless' state!

In Seeking, lock exists and search for the key happens,
While in Understanding, clear conviction prevails that
lock and key were never separate!

Jai Guru
NITIN RAM



November 26, 1979

WHY IS LIFE FULL OF STRIFE?



Visitor: I am asking you questions and you are replying. For you, it seems, all these are unimportant questions. May I know what is of importance to you?

Maharaj: In your worldly experience, what is the most important ?

V: I do not know.

M: You came to know that you are, that you exist. What is of more importance to you than the fact that you are? The most important thing is your beingness or consciousness. But that “I Am” ness is the quality of your food body. As long as the consciousness is present, you may acquire worldly knowledge and be proud of it. However, all that will last only until the food juices in the body are wet. When the juices get dried up, the Vasudeva, or the one who smells his beingness will vanish.

V: My so called existence depends upon food juices.

M: When you return to your country, people will ask you, “What knowledge did you gather there?” What would be your reply?

(Silence)

M: All this is name sake *knowledge* or *jnana* (which is correctly pronounced as *dnyana*) Beyond it is *Vijnana* or *Parabrahman*. The unmanifest has manifested with the happening of the child consciousness or the individual soul.

V: Am I that Child.

M: When you are here, talk only about your own experience. Is it not your child consciousness that is responsible for your knowledge of your world? If that child consciousness had not appeared, would you have asked any questions now?

(No reply)

M: In the beginning the consciousness appears, which is like space and with self-love. It is love to exist. Whoever may come here and however scholarly, I know what has come and I catch hold of it. Without that neither he or nor I would talk.

V: Is it possible to change the child consciousness into adult consciousness?

M: It is like asking how to increase the space. Demolish buildings and the space will increase. Beingness is the quality of the food juices. When they vanish, the beingness goes into the no being state. The child consciousness is not knowledge but ignorance. Prior to consciousness, there is no knowledge of 'I Am'. That is transcending knowledge or *Vijnana* or *Parabrahman*. From this unmanifest non-being state appears the child consciousness. How can it be knowledge? Consciousness is material knowledge, as it is the quality of *sattva* or food juices. Without *sattva*, the consciousness cannot appear.

V: Am I not lucky that I was born? Is not consciousness a blessing?

M: It is the greatest blunder for the beingness to appear from

the non-being state.

V: Do you suggest that couples should not procreate?

M: (*In English*) : Look at you.

V: Why is life full of strife?

M: You must have noticed the strife amongst the five elements. That strife ultimately settles on the earth. Every grain of rice, wheat etc. is composed of the five elements. This strife goes into your food material. All living beings share this food and with it, the strife.

Just as one is affected by consuming alcohol, one is also affected by the strife in one's food.

