

NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ I Am That on Witness

Q: We were told that of all forms of spiritual practices the practice of the attitude of a mere witness is the most efficacious. How does it compare with faith?

M: The witness attitude is also faith; it is faith in oneself. You believe that you are not what you experience and you look at everything as from a distance. There is no effort in witnessing. You understand that you are the witness only and the understanding acts. You need nothing more, just remember that you are the witness only. If in the state of witnessing you ask yourself: 'Who am I?', the answer comes at once, though it is wordless and silent. Cease to be the object and become the subject of all that happens; once having turned within, you will find yourself beyond the subject. When you have found yourself, you will find that you are also beyond the object, that both the subject and the object exist in you, but you are neither. Ch. 64

Q: What is the purpose in reminding oneself all the time that one is the watcher?

M: The mind must learn that beyond the moving mind there is the background of awareness, which does not change. The mind must come to know the true self and respect it and cease covering it up, like the moon which obscures the sun during solar eclipse. Just realise that nothing observable, or experienceable is you, or binds you. Take no notice of what is not yourself. Ch 48

Being the source of both, the self is beyond both knowledge and power. The nature of the self is pure awareness, pure witnessing, unaffected by the presence or absence of knowledge or liking. Undeceive yourself and be free. You are not a person. 141

The body appears in your mind, your mind is the content of your consciousness; you are the motionless witness of the river of consciousness which changes eternally without changing you in any way. Your own changelessness is so obvious that you do not notice it. Have a good look at yourself and all these misconceptions will dissolve. Ch 44

Q: What is the relation between awareness and consciousness?

M: Awareness is primordial; it is the original state, beginningless, endless, uncaused, unsupported, without parts, without change. Consciousness is on contact, a reflection against a surface, a state of duality. ... Awareness is absolute, consciousness is relative to its content; consciousness is always of something. Consciousness is partial and changeful, awareness is total, changeless, calm and silent. And it is the common matrix of every experience.

Q: how does one go beyond consciousness into awareness?

M: since it is awareness that makes consciousness possible, there is awareness in every state of consciousness. Therefore, the very consciousness of being conscious is already a movement in awareness. Interest in your stream of consciousness takes you to awareness. It is not a new state. It is at once recognized as the original, basic existence, which is life itself and also love and joy. Ch 11

Q: Can there be awareness without an object of awareness?

M: Awareness with an object we call witnessing. When there is also self-identification with the object, caused by desire or fear, such a state is called a person. In reality there is only one state; when distorted by self-identification it is called a person, when colored with the sense of being it is the witness; when colorless and limitless, it is called the Supreme. Ch

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Q: Can the witness be without the things to witness?

M: There is always something to witness. If not a thing, then its absence. Witnessing is natural and no problem. The problem is excessive interest, leading to self-identification. Whatever you are engrossed in you take to be real.

M: The witness that is enmeshed in what it perceives is the person; the witness who stands aloof, unmoved and untouched, is the watch-tower of the real, the point at which awareness, inherent in the unmanifested, contacts the manifested. There can be no universe without the witness, there can be no witness without the universe. Ch 79

Nisargadatta Maharaj. I Am That ch. 1: the sense of "I am"

Questioner: It is a matter of daily experience that on waking up the world suddenly appears. Where does it come from?

Maharaj: Before anything can come into being there must be somebody to whom it comes. All appearance and disappearance presupposes a change against some changeless background.

Q: I am always somebody with its memories and habits. I know no other 'I am'.

M: Maybe something prevents you from knowing? When you do not know something which others know, what do you do?

M. Go deep into the sense of 'I am' and you will find. How do you find a thing you have mislaid or forgotten? You keep it in your mind until you recall it. The sense of being, of 'I am' is the first to emerge. Ask yourself whence it comes, or just watch it quietly. When the mind stays in the 'I am' without moving, you enter a state which cannot be verbalised but can be experienced. All you need to do is try and try again.

After all the sense 'I am' is always with you, only you have attached all kinds of things to it -- body, feelings, thoughts, ideas, possessions etc. All these self-identifications are misleading. Because of them you take yourself to be what you are not.

Q: Then what am I?

M: It is enough to know what you are not. You need not know what you are. For as long as knowledge means description in terms of what is already known, perceptual, or conceptual, there can be no such thing as self-knowledge, for what you are cannot be described, except as except as total negation. All you can say is: 'I am not this, I am not that'. You cannot meaningfully say 'this is what I am'. It just makes no sense. What you can point out as 'this' or 'that' cannot be yourself. Surely, you can not be 'something' else. You are nothing perceivable, or imaginable. Yet, without you there can be neither perception nor imagination. You observe the heart feeling, the mind thinking, the body acting; the very act of perceiving shows that you are not what you perceive. Can there be perception, experience without you? An experience must 'belong'. Somebody must come and declare it

as his own. Without an experiencer the experience is not real. It is the experiencer that imparts reality to experience. An experience which you cannot have, of what value is it to you?

Q: The sense of being an experiencer, the sense of 'I am', is it not also an experience?

M: Obviously, every thing experienced is an experience. And in every experience there arises the experiencer of it. Memory creates the illusion of continuity. In reality each experience has its own experiencer and the sense of identity is due to the common factor at the root of all experiencer-experience relations. Identity and continuity are not the same. Just as each flower has its own colour, but all colours are caused by the same light, so do many experiences appear in the undivided and indivisible awareness, each separate in memory, identical in essence. This essence is the root, the foundation, the timeless and spaceless 'possibility' of all experience.

Q: How do I get at it?

M: You need not get at it, for 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 realisation that you are the source and heart of all will dawn upon you. With this will come great love which is not choice or predilection, nor attachment, but a power which makes all things love-worthy and lovable.
Ch 1

I-Am [Use with the 7 pointers from Nisargadatta in booklet 1]

Q: What is the Sadhana for achieving the natural state?

M: **Hold on to the sense "I am"** to the exclusion of everything else. When thus the mind becomes completely silent, it shines with a new light and vibrates with new knowledge. It all comes spontaneously, you need only hold on to the "I Am" You will recognize that you have returned to your natural state by a complete absence of all desire and fear. Ch 69

Q: How to find the way to one's own being?

M: **give up all questions except one: "Who am I?"** After all, the only fact you are sure of is, that you are. The "I am" is certain. The "I am this" is not. Struggle to find out what you are in reality. 66

Separate consistently and perseveringly the "I am" from "this" or "that" and try to feel what it means to be, just to be, without being this or that. Ch 18

Look at yourself in total silence, do not describe yourself. Look at the being you believe you are and remember—you are not what you see. "This I am not—what am I" is the movement of self-inquiry. Resolutely reject what you are not, till the real Self emerges in its glorious nothingness. Ch 100

Give up the idea of being a person, that is all. You need not become what you are anyhow. There is the identity of what you are and there is the person superimposed on it. All you know

is the person, the identity—which is not a person—you do not know, for you never doubted, never asked yourself the crucial question—“Who am I?” The identity is the witness of the person and Sadhana consists in shifting the emphasis from the superficial and changeable person to the immutable and ever-present witness. Ch 86

There is nothing to seek and find, for there is nothing lost. Relax and watch the “I am.” Reality is just behind it. Keep quiet, keep silent; it will emerge, or, rather, it will take you in. ch99

NM: You have put so much energy into building a prison for yourself. Now spend as much on demolishing it. In fact, demolition is easy, for the false dissolves when it is discovered. All hangs on the idea “I Am.” Examine it very thoroughly. It lies at the root of every trouble. It is a sort of skin that separates you from the reality. ... ch63

M: We believe in so many things on hearsay. We believe in distant lands and people, in heavens and hells, in gods and goddesses, because we were told. Similarly, we were told about ourselves, our parents, name, position, duties and so on. We never cared to verify. 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. With the body comes the world, with the world -- God, who is supposed to have created the world and thus it starts -- fears, religions, prayers, sacrifices, all sorts of systems -- all to protect and support the child-man, frightened out of his wits by monsters of his own making. Realize that what you are cannot be born nor die and with the fear gone all suffering ends. Ch. 64

Disregard whatever you think yourself to be and act as if you were absolutely perfect—whatever your idea of perfection may be. All you need is courage. Ch 82