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श्री निसर्गदत्त समाधी चॅरिटेबल ट्रस्ट, मुंबई द्वारा प्रकाशित त्रैमासिक

NISARGAVAANI

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Without the Full understanding of Oneself,
Both in Time and in Timelessness, Life is but
a Dream imposed on us by Powers we don't
know, for purposes we can't grasp.

-Maurice Frydman-

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Appeal for Articles

As any journal depends on articles from potential writers, we appeal all of you to send in articles to us. Self-Knowledge is beyond all religions, caste and creed. Remembering this aspect Nisargavaani will contain wide range of topics not only related to the Self-Knowledge expounded by Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj specifically but also Self-Knowledge teachings of various saints, experiences related to the practice of their methods, biographies, teachings, experiences related to the practice of methods taught by other spiritual masters, teachings and stories from religions other than Hinduism, interpretations of sacred texts and verses, spiritual travel and insights, poetry and of course feedback from our worthy readers. We firmly believe that Spirituality is in itself has a wide and diverse covering aspects.

Suggestions

As a guideline, we request that as far as possible articles should be short (say around 750 words), medium (around 1500 words) or in longer format (around 2300 words).

Please send in your contributions through e-mail to
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EDITORIAL

Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Jiddu Krishnamurti

Both the enlightened thinkers Nisargadatta Maharaj and Jiddu Krishnamurti may, at first glance, seem to have emerged from entirely different spiritual horizons in their outward form and mode of expression. One emerging from the sacred stream of tradition, the other free of all tradition; one radiating the warm, transformative fire of Advaita, the other igniting inquiry with blazing questions that challenge every spiritual structure.

Yet, when one enters the realm of direct experience within their teachings, it becomes evident that though standing on different mountain peaks, both are pointing towards the same central truth. That centre is “the pure observation of Consciousness”. This is the most profound and subtle thread that silently weaves their teachings into oneness. Observation is not a method or a practice; it is the very nature of liberation itself. In the language of Nisargadatta, it appears as the *state of witnessing*; in Krishnamurti’s expression, it is *choiceless awareness*.

Both make it unmistakably clear that such a moment of observation lies beyond all methods, techniques and spiritual systems; it is a moment of unwavering presence. Through their teachings, it

becomes clear that liberation is not something to be attained in the future, but an immediacy of awakened intelligence that can be realized here and now. The deep resonance between these two Masters becomes especially evident in the way they unravel the concept of the “I.” For Krishnamurti, the “I” arises from the mind’s urge for safety — woven from the threads of memory and desire. For Nisargadatta, it is an idea resting upon the original, wordless feeling of “I Am.” When that pure being is mistaken for a person, the illusion of individuality takes shape. Both clearly point out that the fundamental sense of being in experience — the pure feeling “I am” — is untouched and pristine.

Yet, when this simple awareness becomes entangled with the notion “I am this” or “I am that,” the seed of sorrow is sown. From this standpoint, both vigorously dismantle the structure of the ego. They are in complete agreement that this dissolution does not occur through any external effort or imposed discipline; it happens only when the structure of the “Self” is seen clearly. In that very clarity of perception, the construct of “me” begins to lose its foundation — and what seemed so solid collapses on its own. Therefore, the essence of their spiritual approach is not “doing,” but *seeing*. When this seeing happens in actuality — not as an idea, but as a living fact — the grip of mental images and egoic identity begins to loosen. And what remains is the vastness of pure awareness itself!

The depth and sharpness of Krishnamurti’s inquiry into the nature of the mind are so penetrating that listeners often feel as though he is opening an entirely new territory of psychological understanding — a landscape where the movement of the mind is revealed as a purely mechanical process. Nisargadatta Maharaj unfolds this entire process, yet the flavour of his expression is deeply *Vedantic*. He does not merely analyse the movement of the mind; but he also leads the seeker to the very source of consciousness itself. In his dialogues, the roles of mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), memory-consciousness (*chitta*), and ego (*ahamkara*) are explained with remarkable clarity.

Each is placed in its proper perspective — not as the Self, but as instruments appearing within awareness. Where Krishnamurti wields inquiry like a precise blade, Nisargadatta Maharaj illumines with

the light of pure Being — the radiance of the Self. Still, both are in deep agreement: the mind is not the destination, but an object to be observed. In the simple act of clear observation, the mind's boundaries become evident, and its limitations stand revealed. Through this very observation, the gateway to liberation begins to reveal itself to their disciples.

One more vital thread linking their teachings is the investigation of fear. Krishnamurti examines fear with extraordinary precision, revealing that it springs from thought itself. It arises as a mental image projected into the future, sustained by memory and anticipation. In Nisargadatta Maharaj's vision, fear is fundamentally rooted in the identification ... "I am the body." The assumption that when the body perishes, "I" also comes to an end — this very belief gives rise to fear. But if one sees clearly that "I am not the body, not the mind, not even thought" — if one abides as the pure sense of "I Am," as simple being itself — then fear loses its ground. Here, the insights of both teachers converge in a remarkable harmony.

Fear arises from the movement of the mind — from imagination and projection. When its root is seen clearly, it begins to dissolve. Both insist that fear cannot be conquered by escape or suppression. One must face it directly. Do not run away from it. In the very act of looking at fear — without resistance, without naming, without justification — its inner movement unfolds. And in that unfolding, the doors of freedom open on their own.

There is also a deep and striking resonance in their understanding of love. For Krishnamurti, love is a state entirely free from conditions, expectations and psychological images. Love flowers only where the "me" is absent. Nisargadatta Maharaj also regards love as the very expression of Advaita — where there is no "other" at all. For both, love is not a mere emotion; it is a state of consciousness. It is not born of attachment, need, or sentiment, but arises when the sense of "me" begins to dissolve. When the experience of "I Am" becomes pure — free from identification — the division between "I" and "you" fades away. From that non-division, universal love naturally reveals itself. Thus, in their language, love carries no trace of emotional indulgence.

It is rooted in the truth of being itself — impersonal, boundless, and luminous.

Even from a linguistic perspective, a subtle harmony can be seen in their teachings. Krishnamurti's language emerges from the vocabulary of modern psychology and philosophical inquiry, while Nisargadatta Maharaj speaks in the earthy simplicity of rural *Marathi*, enriched with the precision of classical Sanskrit terms and aphorisms.

Yet, despite this difference in expression, the intention behind both languages is the same — to guide the listener beyond the mind. Through observation, Krishnamurti points to the emptiness and deceptive nature of words, whereas Nisargadatta draws attention to the limitations and incompleteness of words. Both affirm that the word is not the Truth; the word is only a pointer. Like a finger indicating the moon, its purpose is not to be worshipped, but to direct attention beyond itself. In their dialogues, words are certainly used — yet they remain transparent. One does not stop at the expression; through the words, something deeper shines forth — the illumination of inner consciousness itself.

Both their teachings stand, in essence, upon the profound significance of “now” — this very moment. For Krishnamurti, the “Now” is not merely a point in chronological time. Rather, it is a vast inner space that emerges when the mind is free from its continuous movement of thought. For Nisargadatta Maharaj, the “Now” is the direct experience of “I Am” — a state where there is neither past nor future, only the pure presence of being. In this sense of being, experience stands in its pristine immediacy, untouched by memory or projection. Thus, in the “Now” spoken of by both of them, there is a deep and subtle resonance. Both affirm that liberation is not an event to be attained in the future; it is available in this very moment.

When the capacity to truly experience the “Now” deepens, the time-bound movements of the mind begin to fall silent. In that silence, the true touch of consciousness reveals itself.

Another unique resonance in the teachings of Nisargadatta Maharaj and Jiddu Krishnamurti lies in their understanding of the non-authoritative nature of Truth.

According to them, Truth cannot be authenticated by any scripture, nor can it be established by tradition. It does not depend upon external validation or inherited belief. Truth is not something to be tested against a standard or measured by any proof; it is something to be lived — to simply *be*. Both teach that the Truth a seeker longs to discover, is not somewhere distant; it is present exactly where the seeker stands — at the very centre of one's own consciousness.

From this perspective, both are pioneers of a new tradition beyond conventional spiritual methods, where truth is experiential, ever-unfolding, and deeply personal in nature.



After the Mahasamadhi of Ramana Maharshi, the spiritual world received a precious gift in the form of *Glimpses of Maharshi*, a remarkable compilation of question-and-answer dialogues presented by Maurice Frydman. The path of Self-knowledge revealed by the Mumbai-based Sadguru Nisargadatta Maharaj was, for a long time, little known—not only to seekers outside India but even to many within the country. Through his celebrated book *I Am That*, Maurice Frydman brought these profound teachings to the attention of the world and played a vital role in spreading Maharaj's message globally.

On **9 March 2026**, fifty years will have passed since the demise of Maurice Frydman. On this occasion, in grateful remembrance of his invaluable contribution, this special cover of the *Nisargavaani* has been designed by dear devotee **Shri Bharatbhai Shimpi**. The entire *Nisargavaani* family offers its humble and heartfelt tribute to the noble soul, **Shri Maurice Frydman**.



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Blessed by Aai Kalavati: A Seeker’s Journey

Freedom Fighter Saint

Madhavananda Prabhujī of Inchageri

MAURICE FRYDMAN

It was Nisargadatta Maharaj himself who chose the title of the book that would bring him worldwide renown: *I Am That*. Although he spoke Marathi, when asked what title should be given to the work, he immediately replied in English: ‘I Am That.’ This occurred in 1973. This story was shared with me by Shri Ramakant Maharaj.

I Am That is an extensive collection of questions posed by devotees, travellers, and seekers, alongside the answers Nisargadatta provided. The book came into being through the intervention of Maurice Frydman. Nisargadatta once remarked that just as Paul Brunton had discovered Ramana Maharshi, Maurice Frydman had discovered him.

Maurice Frydman was born in Warsaw in 1901. At the time, Poland had ceased to exist as an independent state following the Napoleonic Wars, its territory divided between Prussia, Russia, and Austria. It was only after the First World War, through the Treaty of Versailles, that the Polish state was reborn. In this newly free Poland, the young Maurice left to study at the University of *La Sorbonne* in Paris, where he was trained as an engineer.

From an early age, he devoted himself intensely to everything he undertook—especially to spirituality, which became his primary focus at twenty-five. Born into a Jewish family, he had studied the Talmud; he later explored the Russian Orthodox Church before joining the Theosophical Society. It was there, in 1926, that he met J Krishnamurti,

with whom he would remain in close contact for the rest of his life. After arriving in India, he became a disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi and met numerous teachers before eventually encountering Nisargadatta.

In his search, he made no concessions: he refused to simply accept what he was told, seeking instead to experience truth in the most direct way possible. Unwilling to lose himself in the religious labyrinths of others, there was no effort he was not prepared to undertake in this pursuit.

As an engineer, he developed dozens of patents and worked in the Parisian textile industry; later, in 1928, he became the director of a French power station, where the course of his life would change forever. One day in 1935, a minister from the state of Mysore visited the plant and invited Frydman to help develop the State of Karnataka. Frydman told the minister that his bags were already packed.

Shortly before, Maurice had read *A Search in Secret India* by Paul Brunton, published in 1934, a book that had deeply captivated him. The climax of Brunton's work is his encounter with Sri Ramana Maharshi, the sage of *Arunachala*, the 'Red Mountain.'

Under the British rule, India had contributed significantly to the First World War, providing over a million soldiers, of whom more than a hundred thousand perished. As local princes and rulers demanded greater autonomy, it became evident that the British would have to make political concessions. This led to the 1935 Government of India Act. Although the law appeared to share power, it effectively maintained the colonial status quo. Maurice Frydman would soon become both a witness to and a participant in the national liberation movement alongside Gandhi ji himself. Regarding his deep connection to the country, Sri Ramana Maharshi famously remarked of him: 'He belongs only to India. Somehow, he was born abroad, but he has returned here again.'

He worked about two hundred kilometres from Arunachala—the mountain where Sri Ramana Maharshi lived—and travelled there at every opportunity. He became a *sannyasin*, or renunciant, and adopted monastic robes, even though Sri Ramana Maharshi had discouraged him from doing so. He was given the name Bharatananda, which he

would later use for his spiritual writings. While some say Gandhiji bestowed this name upon him, others attribute it to Swami Ramdas. Just as Gandhiji dressed in white and Ramdas wore ochre, Frydman followed suit until such outward symbols no longer held meaning for him.

While serving as the director of an industrial plant in Bangalore, Maurice continued to wear his monastic robes. This created a conflict with the Minister of the State of Mysore, who felt uncomfortable presenting a director dressed in such a manner to official visitors. Eventually, he moved to the small State of Aundh—which would later be incorporated into the State of Maharashtra—not far away. It was there that he met Mr. Apa Pant, a prince who would later become a distinguished diplomat.

“It was around 1938 when he met Gandhiji, and together they participated in an experimental program of Self-government. This collaboration led to both drafting the constitution for the independent State of Aundh—a unique enclave within the British Raj. Furthermore, for a brief period, Maurice served as the *Dewan*, or Prime Minister, of this new state.”

Gandhiji represents the more political phase of Frydman’s life. While embracing the ideals of the father of modern India, he worked tirelessly for the country’s social development. There is a famous image of Gandhiji at his spinning wheel, or *charkha*; it was Maurice Frydman who built it for him. At Gandhi’s request, he developed spinning wheels that operated three times faster than previous models. Thus, a powerful national symbol was literally refined by the hands of the Polish engineer.

India gained independence in 1947 and its first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru—whose close bond with Gandhiji dated back to 1931—already knew Frydman well. Together, they would play a decisive role during a crisis of immense proportions: the Chinese occupation of Tibet. In 1959, as Mao Zedong’s forces invaded Tibet, subjecting the population to terror, Nehru remained hesitant, fearing a direct confrontation with China. It was Maurice Frydman who adamantly urged him to grant asylum to the Tibetan people. Frydman

had already anticipated the tragedy, organizing the preservation of sacred Tibetan texts by bringing them to India before the invasion. Later, he was instrumental in ensuring the Dalai Lama's safe passage to India and his meeting with Nehru on April 24 of that year. Alongside Apa Pant, Frydman secured several settlements for the refugees, most notably in the former British hill station of Dharamsala, which remains the seat of the Dalai Lama to this day. On the fiftieth anniversary of the Tibetan community in India, the Dalai Lama expressed his profound gratitude, acknowledging Frydman's tireless work—especially for children—as being both 'moral and practical'.

In the early 1960s, the Khadi movement—central to India's national liberation—was in complete disarray in Bombay. Knowing that Maurice was a man capable of bringing order to even the most chaotic situations, his friend Nehru asked him to take charge of the movement. It must have been around 1963. Living in the city was a long-time friend and devotee of his, Miss Petite, who would host him in her home until his final days. Hilla Petite (known as Hirubai in some sources) had received a higher education—an opportunity often denied to women at the time—thanks to Maurice's support. Together with her adopted daughter, Bhulal, she had accompanied Maurice and Apa Pant on their arduous journeys through the Himalayas, searching for settlement sites for the Tibetan refugees.

Nehru died in 1964. At sixty-five, Maurice Frydman was still a man with much to accomplish.

Around 1965, Shri J Krishnamurti was also in Bombay, preparing the publication of one of his books. The publisher was Chetana Publications, headed by Mr. Sudhakar Dikshit, who invited Maurice to collaborate on the editing process. According to Chhaya Arya, Mr. Dikshit's daughter, it was Mr. Apa Pant who introduced the two men. Since Mr. Dikshit did not speak Marathi fluently, Maurice acted as his interpreter. Mr. Sudhakar Dikshit was a formidable personality—a staunch supporter of Indian culture and Vedanta philosophy. A scholar in his own right, he possessed a vast library and studied its contents deeply.

One day, Mr. Dikshit told Maurice that he was going to introduce him to a sage. The ashram on *Khetwadi Lane* had already been established for nearly twenty years. Maurice later recounted that first encounter to Sri Ganesan (great-nephew of Ramana Maharshi) as they walked together through the streets of Bombay. Ganesan recorded the story, and it is through him that it reached us:

'I saw a group of people smoking beedis and recounting their misfortunes. That simple man was responding exactly as Ramana Maharshi would have done. Had Ramana spoken in Marathi, it would have been the same! I stopped dead in my tracks and listened intently. I was astonished to see an ordinary man, a seller of beedis, speaking with such profound authority.'

'Maharaj is free from all affectation and has built no ceremonial wall around himself. He is a humble man teaching humble people how to find the Real in a humble way. He maintains no large ashram and seeks no donations. He belongs to the tradition of the Saints of Maharashtra—householders and workers who were upright men, loyal friends, and wise counsellors. He lives with his family in a modest apartment in a narrow alley, leading a simple life. The only feature in his home that draws the eye is the magnificent image of his guru, whom he worships daily alongside a few disciples.'

Jean Dunn relates that *'Maurice described his great master as kind, sensitive, and possessing a keen sense of humour. He (Nisargadatta) was completely fearless and profoundly authentic—an inspiration, guide, and support to all who came to him.'*

'I began visiting the ashram every day and taking notes on what he said. Later, I would return home and translate all the questions and answers into English.' Maurice felt a sense of guilt for not having sought permission for his work; however, when he finally told Nisargadatta, the Master was delighted: *'Go on, keep making the recordings,'* he urged him. Those recordings and translations eventually coalesced into the book *I Am That*.

During the preparation of the book, Maurice turned to Mrs. Petite for help in deciphering the most complex phrases used by Nisargadatta. He also relied on the collaboration of Mr. Arvind Kaji, who recalls:

'In 1970, Maurice Frydman was working as an honorary advisor to a Municipal Commission.' Throughout this period, their professional work and the translation of Maharaj's teachings often intertwined.

Mr. Arvind began visiting Nisargadatta because Maurice had a habit of bringing along his acquaintances. Around six in the evening, Arvind would go to Maurice's home in the Katgara Building on Nepean Sea Road, where together they would listen to the recordings of the conversations. Afterwards, they would read through the translated text and discuss every point in detail to ensure absolute accuracy. By the early 1970s, as the manuscript neared completion, Maurice presented it to Mr. Dikshit for publication.

The first edition of *I Am That* appeared in 1973 and sent a shockwave through the spiritual world.

For Chhaya Arya, *'I Am That is Chetana's greatest contribution to Indian society and culture—a profound and lucid presentation of Jnana Yoga and Vedanta philosophy. It has transformed lives forever, not only in India but globally, and continues to do so more than five decades after its first publication.'*

How did the book become so famous in the West? It was Sri Ganesan who suggested to Jean Dunn—an American journalist and writer then living at Ramanashram—that she read *I Am That*. Though initially reluctant, she eventually read it and soon travelled to Bombay to meet Nisargadatta in person. She wrote a marvellous article for *The Mountain Path*, the magazine published by Ramanashram. As the journal was distributed worldwide, the news spread like wildfire. Almost overnight, the tiny ashram on Khetwadi Lane began to fill with foreigners who, upon reading the book, had packed their bags to visit the man who would become their Master."

In 1976, Maurice Frydman was struck by a vehicle—either a motorcycle or a three-wheeler. Bedridden and unable to care for himself, he found that Mrs. Petite, even older than him, could not provide the necessary assistance. Yet Sri Ramana Maharshi—who had passed away in 1950—was still watching over his devotee. A nurse, accustomed to charging high fees for her services, had a vivid dream in which a *sadhu* told her clearly: *'My devotee is suffering. Go and take*

care of him.’ He provided the exact address. When the nurse arrived and offered her help, the austere Maurice initially refused. Offended and about to leave, she suddenly noticed a photograph of Ramana Maharshi on the wall. ‘That is the sadhu I saw in my dream!’ she exclaimed. Deeply moved, Maurice replied: ‘*So, my Master has come to take care of me.*’

Mr. Apa Pant, who regarded Maurice as his guru, met Nisargadatta in 1975 and remained by his friend’s side during his final days. He received an urgent message: ‘*The sage is dying and has asked for you, Apa. Come as soon as you can.*’ When he arrived, he found Maurice lying in a room that—along with every object within it—was meticulously clean and orderly. The doctor, the nurse, and Mrs. Petite informed him that Maurice was refusing both food and medication, ignoring all their pleas; they knew well that once he had decided, no one could sway him. As Apa Pant approached the bed, Maurice looked at him and asked: ‘*Apa, who is dying?*’

The following day, Maurice asked everyone to leave, until only Apa Pant remained by his side. He then said: ‘*Apa, I hear music; I see a bright light. Who is dying? No one is dying. This ailing body is all that keeps me from that harmonious beauty. Do not let them hold me in this body. Go in peace.*’ The next day, everyone gathered as he drew his final breath—three slow breaths: ‘*Hari Om... Hari Om... Hari Om*’—and then he was gone. It was March 9, 1976.

A few hours later, in the presence of Nisargadatta Maharaj, the body of Maurice Frydman was cremated. In the eyes of Nisargadatta, ‘*Maurice was a jnani, a saint, a sage.*’ Following the cremation, Maharaj placed a photograph of Maurice in his ashram, alongside the other Indian saints already hanging upon its walls.

Apotheosis

Much remains to be said about Maurice Frydman, and there will always be more to add—even details that seem contradictory—for he left behind no written records of his own. He was a man of lucidity, compassion, humility, and immense generosity. He helped

whomever he could, promoting the education of underprivileged women, campaigning against the death penalty, and improving the living conditions of those who were in prison. He spoke fifteen languages, including several Indian dialects and fluent Marathi, which enabled him to translate Nisargadatta into English. His intelligence, linguistic mastery, and tenacious will were the tools that made his extraordinary life possible.

It is thanks to Maurice Frydman that Nisargadatta's voice reached the West. Without his relentless persistence, his linguistic precision, and his deep spiritual recognition, the teachings of the 'Tobacco Seller of Bombay' might have remained a hidden treasure known only to a few.

This biography is a sacred offering to all those who knew Maurice Frydman and Nisargadatta Maharaj, and to those who continue to live by their light.

— Antonio Plana



Happiness is your nature. It is not wrong to desire it. What is wrong is seeking it outside when it is inside.

— *Ramana Maharshi* —

The story of Edith Deri and Nisargadatta Maharaj

Edith Deri was an accountant in a reputed bank in Paris. Every year she would spend all her earned holidays of the year at Sri Ramanasramam. She would land in Bombay, catch a flight to Madras, take a taxi and arrive at our Ashram without halting anywhere. Her dedication to Sri Bhagavan and His teaching was that deep. I became very fond of her and even addressed her as my ‘French Mother’! She too responded and addressed me as ‘Son’!

When she read my encounters with Nisargadatta Maharaj in ‘The Mountain Path’, she got very upset. On her next visit, she chided me for wasting time by going away from Arunachala to Bombay to be with another teacher. She asked me, “What is lacking in Sri Bhagavan’s teaching that you needed that teacher’s help?” She was a powerful personality.

It was clear to me that no amount of verbal explanation on my part, would convince her. So I told her, “Mother! You have to be with Maharaj to know why I go there. On your next visit, stop for a day in Bombay, go to him and see for yourself!” She agreed.

The next year, during the milk offering at the Ashram early morning puja, I felt the warmth of an affectionate pat on my back. It was my French Mother! She looked overflowingly happy. She hurriedly drew me out and narrated the following, with great joy:

“As directed by you, my dear ‘Son’, I stopped for a day in Bombay and went to see Maharaj. I was simmering with anger. I wanted to take him to task for luring my ‘Son’ away from my Sri Bhagavan!

I went to Maharaj's house at ten. When I climbed up the stairs, there was a large crowd already gathered in front of Maharaj. So, I sat on the last step itself.

Maharaj welcomed me with a smile and a nod of his head. This infuriated me further. I controlled myself and kept quiet.

Maharaj told me, "Ask some question." I didn't respond. He insisted a few times that I ask him something. I became restless and angrily blurted out, "I have nothing to ask of you. There is no doubt in me." Maharaj still persisted with his demand.

I became really angry and said:

"Why are you insisting on my asking you a question? Is it to show off your greatness to your audience? That is, I should ask a question and you will answer it and smash my doubting mind, right? And the entire audience will applaud you, right? Is that not the reason you go on insisting that I should put a question to you?"

I was certainly rude but I could not hide my irritation. I had to take it out on him. "Maharaj was all the time graciously directing his look on me, with a beatific smile on his face. He was untouched by my expression of anger and intolerance. After a few minutes of concentrated look at me, he opened his mouth and words rolled down like a waterfall:

"Water is never bothered whether the thirst of the man is quenched or not!" Maharaj repeated it slowly but with emphasis a couple of times: "Water is never bothered whether the thirst of the man is quenched or not!"

Something wonderful took place in me! All my anger, frustration and irritation vanished and in their place a sea of peace, silence and bliss surged up. This experience helped me transcend my mind's limitations; and, I became immensely happy.

I am very happy I met him. Thank you, my 'Son'! Maharaj is truly a great Saint!"

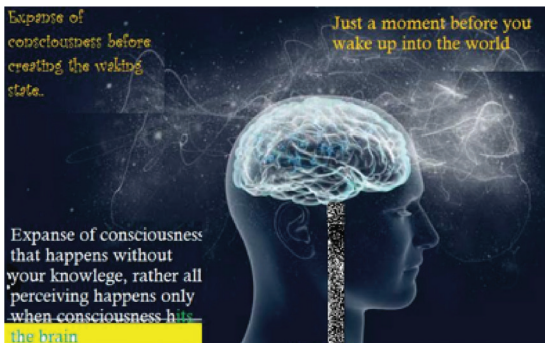
– V. Ganesan

Excerpted from *Meetings With Sages And Saints*
(Lighthouses Guiding Seeker's Journey Within)

– Traducción Antonio Plana

‘Consciousness’ – the constant factor of life

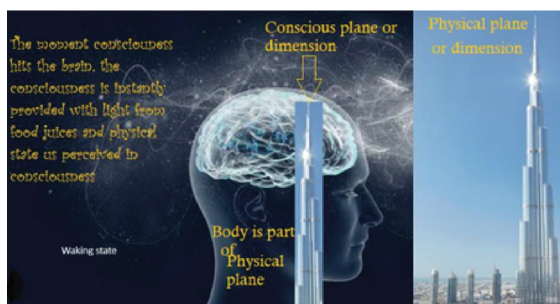
I was sharing the teachings of Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj to an American co-worker while we were on a business trip in China. We were having a discussion on the topic of ‘consciousness’, especially about *Saguna Brahman* versus *Nirguna Brahman*. As the Sanskrit words were a little difficult for my American friend to grasp, we referred to the Saguna Brahman (aka the ‘I AM’ or the ‘I’ thought) as the small ‘c’, and it is this little consciousness that moves without the knowledge of our senses. We labelled the Nirguna Brahman as the big ‘C’, as it is the immovable self.



Consciousness is very subtle knowledge and hard to grasp. Most people are caught up in the physical world and get engrossed in duality and multiplicity. It is life-giving knowledge to know that the physical world is left unperceived if not for the arising of our consciousness

(small c). The world is unperceived if there is no consciousness within our head. The small c or the I AM is a pre-condition for the physical world to exist.

In the below picture of waking state, you can see that the world can be perceived only when the subtle consciousness has arisen and created the waking state. The small c is up with light and world is reflected as images, sound, sensations etc. After 'c' goes up the memory probably lists out the last thoughts from previous night and the chain of thoughts continue and we are lost in it.



In the following picture of the dream state, where there is the consciousness (c) is instantly flooded with light and impressions of memory that causes movement like in a motion picture. It is like we are watching a movie and it's like we are having a subtle dream body.



Now, for the sake of argument, we can compare our dream and the waking state and conclude that consciousness is the constant factor in both these mental states. In waking state of the mind, the physical world including our body is reflected in our consciousness (c) and there is continuation of memory between these waking states.

In dream state of mind, the physical world including our body is not perceived, and consciousness projects a dream world and the dreamer. However there is no continuation of memory between the dream states.

The consciousness and its light is a common factor for perceiving to happen. Perceiving is our pure state while perceiver and perceptions are imagined entities.

The I AM or small c is needed for both the waking and the dream states. As per Maharaj's teachings, it is required for seekers to constantly brood over this knowledge and abide in 'I AM' and be freed of the physical body identity.

The supreme self or the Nirguna brahman or the big C is there as a transcended principle and not touched by these mental states or by the world or the body.. The small c arises on the big C and creates the waking state. The movement of small c also creates the dream and deep sleep states. The big C is a witness to all of these states and is not affected by any of it. Space and time only exist in small c but not for the big C.

You don't see the arising of consciousness 'c' before waking up is the cause of the primary illusion – 'that we are born into the physical world' and that's the reason Krishna says 'All beings are born into delusion' in the Bhagavad Gita. It's this primary illusion that needs to be broken to make solid spiritual progress in jnana path.

The unique opportunity of this human birth is that we will have to realize the secretive presence of small 'c'. Its hard to stabilize in this small 'c'. Its not body having a consciousness inside as body is an object to this consciousness.

A hole in the paper appears in the paper and is not of paper.
– Nisargadatta Maharaj

The consciousness that appears in the body is in the body but it is not of the body !!

This mysterious knowledge of consciousness is precious and requires a lot of listening and reflection. This can lead to the transformation of the seeker where the body-mind is no longer the subject of this world. It is consciousness ('c') the subject in which all

objects appear and disappear. If we live as consciousness and not as body-mind entity there are endless blessings to follow. All that you will need to know happens spontaneously in this consciousness.

Jai Guru !

– Viswanathan (Vishy) Sankaran
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A person caught in a whirlpool mostly loses his life due to suffocation as the water enters into his nose and mouth. But on the other hand, another person dives deep inside through the whirlpool and escapes, is saved. Likewise, you are caught in the body-mind whirlpool and therefore, need to dive deep inside and find way out to survive !

– Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj

PROLOGUE

(PURVARAMBH)

**“Take refuge in the Sadguru; hold firmly to His words in your heart.
By that, your ignorance shall disappear, dear one.” ॥7 ॥**

Commentary:

Through *satsang*, one attains the Supreme Reality; therefore, one must first surrender to the Sadguru. The manner of this surrender will be explained further ahead. Having surrendered to the Sadguru, one should listen to the true scriptures and to the teachings of the Upanishads. From such listening arise reflection (*manana*) and deep contemplation (*nididhyāsana*). The teaching, “I am Brahman,” alone should be held firmly in the heart. Not knowing one’s own true nature is itself ignorance. For the removal of that ignorance, the steady conviction “I am Brahman” is called knowledge. Just as light alone has the power to dispel darkness, so too knowledge alone is capable of swallowing up ignorance. Therefore, one must hold firmly to that very teaching. (7).

Once again, the disciple prayed:

**“How is one to recognize the Sadguru? O Bestower, please tell me
that.**

What teaching should I receive from Him?” ॥8 ॥

Commentary:

In this world, there are many hypocritical and misleading paths. Therefore, how is one to recognize the true Sadguru? And since there

are many kinds of instructions, mantras, yantras, and other methods of teaching, which teaching should one receive from the Sadguru? Out of compassion, O Bestower — the One who gives by revealing His own True Nature — please tell me this. (8)

Now Sadgurunath gives His reply:

“Listen to the marks of the Sadguru: He is endowed with *Brahmajnana* along with right conduct; free from desire and devoid of ego — from him alone should liberation be sought.” ॥9॥

Commentary:

Here, the marks of the Sadguru are stated briefly. Above all, true knowledge is essential. Knowledge here means the knowledge of one's own true nature; this is called *Brahmajnana*.

He may appear outwardly active only in a secondary sense; in truth, his real activity consists in peace, forgiveness, and compassion. Religious observances and ritual performances do not constitute the true activity spoken of here. Or else, this active knowledge may be understood as that illuminating power which severs the disciple's doubts and misgivings. Wherever this is found, there indeed is the Sadguru.

Now, setting aside those other teachers who are intent only on taking the wealth of others, the outer characteristics of the true Sadguru are described. He is free from desire, for apart from his own True Nature, nothing else exists for him as an object. What could remain unattained for him, that any desire should still arise?

Therefore, from Brahma down to the very last of immovable things, he has not the slightest desire for anything. The reason for this is his egolessness: the notions of “I” and “you” have vanished from his understanding. Such is his freedom from self-identity. For him, all is only the Self. He abides in the certainty that is free from the ego-thought, from the notion of “I.”

From such a Sadguru alone should liberation be sought. Teachings concerning mantras and similar practices belong to the conventional path and serve for the purification of the inner being. Yet the worthy aspirant should pass beyond these and seek liberation alone.

If you ask, “In what manner is liberation to be sought from the Sadguru?” then listen. The Self alone is unsurpassed Bliss; that itself is liberation. Its attainment is through knowledge. When one realizes that the inner Self itself is Brahman, then one is freed from bondage, which is of the nature of ignorance. It is this alone that should be sought as liberation.

The Sadguru, through instruction, bestows liberation by means of knowledge. This is not the liberation spoken of as *salokya*, *samipya*, and the like. Such forms of liberation, being based on duality, are spoken of only for the sake of those who still remain steeped in ignorance. Therefore, liberation is one alone. That liberation abides only with the Sadguru; therefore, it should be sought from Him.

One should not seek liberation in a vague or postponing spirit, saying, “When will liberation come to me? When will I attain liberation?” It should not be sought in that way. Rather, while there is still strength in the body, one should hasten without delay, surrender to the Sadguru, and seek liberation.

For human life lasts no longer than the brief instant in which a drop of water vanishes upon red-hot iron. Therefore, one must seek liberation from the Sadguru with utmost urgency.

For the firm establishment of that liberation, the disciple now prays to the Sadguru:

“Tell me, O Master, what indeed is meant by liberation.

O Ocean of Compassion, O God of gods, do not forsake me.” ॥10 ॥

Commentary:

To answer the disciple’s prayer, the Master now begins to unfold the nature of liberation itself. Behind and before, within and without, below and above, to the left and to the right — wherever one may look, the Self alone exists, uniformly one and the same in its own essential nature. It has no boundary anywhere, nor has it any end. Therefore, no limit can ever be set to that Reality, for it is immeasurable. The Self alone is whole unto itself — perfect, all-pervading, and complete. (43)

Now, out of compassion for the seeker of slower understanding who longs to grasp the inner meaning, the Master speaks from this point

onward through twelve verses, employing the method of agreement and negation (*anvaya-vyatireka*). In doing so, he firmly establishes the infinitude of the Self. He also makes clear that the true nature of the Self is beyond the grasp of the mind. At the same time, he confirms the state of liberation while yet living. And even without the disciple having raised the question, the Master, out of grace, offers the nectar of Truth to one already destined for immortality.

Holding many such purposes within his heart, the Master now speaks:

“Where the mind’s flight comes to an end, beyond that, the Vast still stretches immeasurably.

Then the mind turns back in retreat, returning by the very path it came.” ||44 ||

“Whichever direction it went forth to explore, that very direction it left behind.

The striving seeker rushes onward before it, yet finds no end.” ||45 ||

“Having surveyed the eight directions, it then soared upward along the higher path;

piercing the sky, it passed beyond, to what lay farther still.” ||46 ||

“It crossed immense expanses of emptiness and moved about through the vastness of space.

Then, with its face turned upward, it sought to behold That.” ||47 ||

“Unsupported, utterly distinct, subtle beyond grasp, beyond all movement —

beholding the inconceivable, its very capacity fell away within.”

||48 ||

“Then it returned again to its own place

and plunged downward into the nether depths,

seeking the end at the bottom of the seven nether worlds.” ||49 ||

“But that depth was unfathomably profound. It kept diving for a long, long while,

until, finding no resting place at all, it fell into utter bewilderment.”

||50 ||

“Then from there it rose again, upward into the vast expanse.

Greatly wearied,
it still could not discover the end of the Self's true nature." ||51 ||

Commentary:

Up to this point, through these eight verses beginning with "Where the mind's flight comes to an end" and ending with "it still could not discover the end of the Self's true nature," it has been shown that the Self is inconceivable, without boundary, immeasurable, and all-pervading through the eight directions. This has now been firmly established.

It has also been shown to be beyond the grasp of the mind. Having roamed through the eight directions, above and below, the mind grew weary, yet it could not arrive at any limit whatsoever — whether as "this much," "that much," "so great," "like this," "like that," or in any other way. Thus, it has been clearly confirmed that the Self is unattainable by the mind, exactly as the scriptures declare.

And for the knower too, this certainty arises: the Self cannot be known as an object in its own true nature. Further, wherever the mind of the liberated one may go, there is no place empty of the Self. Therefore, whether the mind moves or remains still has no bearing upon the *jivanmukta*.

And what is his certainty? It is this: "I am the Self. Mind and all else do not appear to belong to me, not even in dream. I, the Self, am the infinite ocean of Consciousness-Life. In me, this mind — made only of imagination — is but a wave. And along with that wave of mind, the entire moving and unmoving universe arises like bubbles and subsides again. Whether these arise in time or dissolve back into time, what loss can there be to me, who am Infinite? And equally, what gain can there be?"

Now a second metaphor is offered: "I, the Self, am the infinite expanse of Consciousness-Sky. There, Maya in the form of ignorance is but a cloud. There, the mind is but lightning. Time itself is the season of rain. And the world, in all its moving and unmoving forms, is but the rainwater. Let this rain pour forth, or let it not fall at all — what loss can there be to me, who am the sky of Consciousness? And what gain can there be? No gain or loss can truly touch me."

Thus, the state of liberation while living is firmly established.

Now, how is this practice to be undertaken by the seeker of duller understanding who longs to grasp the inner meaning? This will now be explained step by step. By “duller understanding” is meant one who has understood the truth indirectly (*paroksha*), yet is unable to bring forth the inquiry that leads to direct realization (*aparoksha*). For such a seeker, the appropriate practice is contemplation in the form of **nididhyāsana**.

In these eight verses, the teaching is expressed through the method of negation (*vyatireka*). Therefore, the aspirant should sit quietly in a secluded place and turn attention toward that which is the very basis of the mind. There, the seeker should observe the Reality which is without support and without appearance. It is experienced somewhat like the vastness of the sky.

Into that inner sky the mind should be allowed to rest. All other objects and imaginations should be restrained through discrimination and dispassion. When this is done, the mind begins to move within that inner sky, and gradually it acquires a taste for its own innate bliss. Through this, doubts and contrary tendencies fall away. Thereafter, the path of true inquiry opens. Then the Self becomes directly realized by itself, in its own immediacy.

In this way, the devotion of wisdom (*vidyā-bhakti*) arises through this practice. Therefore, this practice should be earnestly undertaken by seekers.

Thus, the purport of these verses has been briefly explained. To elaborate further would lead to undue length. Yet it must be understood that through this very practice, the devotion born of true knowledge arises. Hence, aspirants should diligently cultivate it. (44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51).

Now the reach of the mind has become exhausted. Then it is said:

“Having wandered through the ocean of the Self and returned, it had become utterly drained. Its very purity exhausted, it fell, devoid of strength and without awareness.” ॥52 ॥
(*That whose clarity had been lost or exhausted.*)

Commentary:

Having roamed thus far through the ocean of the Self, the mind returned without finding any end to it. Now all effort had come to an end. Its strength and clarity exhausted, it fell powerless and insentient. That is to say, abandoning its own imaginations, it began to remain in its substratum.

Just as the bull at the oil-press, worn out from moving in the same circle, finally sinks down and sits where it stands, so too was this state.
(52)

Now the teaching proceeds by the method of affirmation (*anvaya*):

**“That which it had gone forth to seek by the power of its own
awareness,
it beheld as abiding close to itself. Then, struck with wonder, it stood
astonished within.” ||53 ||**

Commentary:

That which it had gone forth to seek, it found abiding in its own immediate presence. Yet the farther it seemed to go, the more the Self appeared ever behind it, ever already present. As long as the mind sought to see it as an object, it could not understand. Then it abandoned the very attempt to see.

And in that stillness, it discovered That to be ever near — indeed, nearest of all — its own very substratum. Then, filled with amazement, it fell into wonder.

It exclaimed inwardly: “Alas! For the sake of this Reality, I performed *japa*, *tapa*, vows, observances, worship, and meditation — yet all the while I did not know that the Self was ever present, ever near.” Then it cried, “Blessed indeed is the compassionate Sadguru-Mother, who has revealed the Self to me by so simple and direct a means.”

Thereupon, the throat choked with emotion, the body thrilled with ecstasy, and tears of love began to stream from the eyes. Thus arose the eight *sattvika bhavas* — the pure ecstatic signs of spiritual awakening.
(53)

And again, it began to speak in wonder:

*“That which had been sought so long and so intensely,
was seen to be ever near at hand.
When one turned to look toward oneself,
That itself was found to be oneself.” #54 ||*

Commentary:

Ah! What a marvel this is. That Reality which had been sought so earnestly was found to be ever-present, abiding in one’s very nearness. That is to say, it was recognized through the eye of knowledge. Yet the words “it was seen” or “it was known” still suggest an indirect knowing. How then is direct realization to be spoken of?

It is this: when one turned toward oneself, that very Reality was found to be none other than oneself. Just as what appears as a snake is in truth only the rope; as the pot is nothing but clay; as the ornament is only gold; and as the cloth is but cotton — so too, all that appears in oneself as the universe is nothing but Brahman. The appearance too is Brahman; bliss too is Brahman. In truth, there is no separate place for anything apart from oneself.

Indeed, just as the snake, the pot, the ornament, and the cloth have never truly come into independent existence, while rope, clay, gold, and cotton are self-existent, so too the Self alone is complete and ever-established, while mind and all else have never truly arisen. Thus, through this practice, the seeker attains direct realization.

And that attainment occurs only to the one in whom such realization dawns; to others it cannot truly be conveyed. What was said earlier now stands confirmed as true: only when separateness is broken does realization occur. Whether it be the apparent separateness of mind and its adjuncts, or the distinction between seeker and sought — at the very moment this sense of difference dissolves, at that very moment the Self is attained. This is what is meant by direct realization and the peace of non-dual fulfillment. One’s very being is Brahman alone. (54)

Now it is made clear through an illustration that this realization

belongs only to the one who has attained it:

*“As salt wholly becomes one with the sea, so it merged into the Self.
By that union, wealth was joined to wealth.” ||55 ||*

Commentary:

Earlier, illustrations such as the rope and the snake were given. In the same way, salt, when dissolved, becomes entirely one with the ocean. So too, the mind, casting off its insubstantiality, became of the nature of Being, Consciousness, and Bliss (*asti-bhati-priya*). It became one with the very essence of the Self.

It was as though wealth had been joined to wealth. Here, “wealth” means true spiritual riches. One’s own nature as Sat-Chit-Ananda had seemed lost because of identification with the unreal, inert, and sorrowful. Through inquiry, through the grace of the Sadguru, and through listening to the true scriptures, that lost treasure was regained. Now all has been fulfilled; the state of complete blessedness has been attained. (55)

*“Such is the state of the Self; only those of direct realization truly
know it.*

*This attainment of the Supreme Reality
comes through the awakening bestowed by the Sadguru.” ||56 ||*

Commentary:

Such indeed is the state of the Self — the very state that has been expounded throughout this work, from its beginning to its conclusion. Or again, what is so wondrous about this state? Its wonder is this: by this state, the Absolute is established in its utter aloneness. On one side is body-consciousness — “I am the body,” “this is my world,” pleasure and pain, merit and demerit, and all such notions. On the other side is the awareness of Brahman, the direct experience of Bliss itself. What relation has my helplessness under action to this? And what relation has that to my actionless nature?

Ah, such a state is not attained through rituals, duties, yogic practices, or sacrificial acts. This state was bestowed upon me by the

revered Sadguru. Oh, what wonder! Blessed is the Sadguru, blessed the scriptures, blessed this attainment! Ah, I alone am — there is no other whatsoever. In overflowing completeness, I have known myself by myself alone. This is not an object accessible even to Brahma and the other gods. What I am, I simply am. In me, not the slightest modification has ever arisen, nor shall it ever arise.

Ah, where have this universe, ignorance, and Maya gone? I see nothing apart from myself. Indeed, I had gone in search of God, and behold — I myself have become God in my own being.

And what further wonder is there in this state? Whether meditation is practiced or not, it remains the same. What is present in *samadhi* is the very same in the waking state. In activity too, that very state remains unchanged. It is the same in silence, and the same in speech. The state that is present in remembrance remains equally present in forgetfulness. Oh, what marvel indeed!

Objection: “Granted, this indeed is the true state — but what is the authority for it?”

To this the answer is: those established in direct experience know it. The seers of Truth — the Sanakadi sages and the other sages, the realized saints of the present, and those yet to come — are the witnesses to it. Or rather, blessed indeed are those saints who know this state through their own direct realization.

In this very state, liberation while living, the bodiless state, and the natural state arise of themselves; and beyond this there is not even the notion of being eternally free. Therefore, blessed is this state of the Self, and blessed are those realized ones who know it by direct experience.

Objection: “You have described this state at such length. We too have listened from the very beginning to the entire exposition and understood it. Why then does such a state not arise in us?”

The answer is: this Reality is attained only through the awakening bestowed by the Sadguru. Such a state, which is itself of the nature of Reality, comes to the one in whom devotion to the Guru arises from the depths of the heart. For such a one, it is brought about through the Sadguru’s direct awakening alone. Merely reading the text, without

dispassion and without devotion to the Guru, can never bring about this realization. Therefore, one who truly longs for this state must serve at the feet of the Sadguru. Let devotion to the Guru arise from the depths within. (56)

Objection: “If this indeed is the state of the Self, then how is one to understand the inexpressible nature of that Reality which is directly experienced?”

To this, the following is said:

“Such is the knowledge of the Self; yet beyond even this lies fulfillment.

For that, one’s own mind is the witness — for it is inexpressible.”

॥57 ॥

“One who has truly become the worthy child, who has been inwardly fulfilled in every way —that silent bliss of the Self can never be conveyed in words.” ॥58 ॥

“That which cannot truly be spoken of is attained only by those who have realized it.

It comes through the profound grace of the Sadguru, through words unfathomably deep.” ॥59 ॥

“When faith is firmly placed in the words of the Sadguru, the knots of worldly bondage are severed.

So prays Ramdas to Rama, with simple and loving devotion.” ॥60 ॥

Commentary:

Ah, O questioner — this state that has been spoken of, indeed this entire exposition, is but knowledge of the Self. Yet the supreme fulfilment still remains beyond it. Words may indeed be spoken, but their true import cannot be fully conveyed.

It is like being asked, “What is sugar like?” One may answer, “It is sweet.” But what kind of sweetness is it? That sweetness remains something apart, something that cannot truly be expressed. In the same way, these words too may be spoken, yet their incomparable meaning remains beyond speech.

That alone is the true fulfilment, and for this one’s own mind is the

witness. It is inexpressible. Thus, what the scriptures and the realized ones declare — that Brahman is beyond all description — comes here to be known as true in direct experience. And to this, one's own mind alone stands witness. ॥57 ॥

Thus ends the section titled **Purvarambha**.



Though the God is within you, you do not meet him
in your entire life. He is omnipresent, but everyone
fails to see him. With your great fortune if you meet
saints, you can have darshan of God.

With great opportunity
Ramdas had that fortune as he experienced
that God dwells in his body itself

– Samarth Ramdas Swami

I am I AM. I AM is my home.

The world today is particularly chaotic and increasingly becoming more so. So called technological progress has only made minds busier, losing depth of experience and connection in the process. In this constant loud overwhelming environment, sensitive souls have no other recourse but to seek refuge in their internal cosmos and possibly stumbling across that most precious treasure - the I AM!

I got to know Anil Chube through my father. A while ago, I came across a Marathi copy of “I am that” which I thought he might find interesting. He introduced me to Anil Chube and we got to connect over a call. It was a great pleasure to know that he suggested writing for Nisargavaani. I am not a writer, being a man of few words and an introvert, and the words are awfully inadequate pointers when it comes to spiritual things - hopefully my spiritual journey resonates with one of you!

For the most of my life, I identified with intellect and reasoning, valued critical thinking above feelings and experience. Ironically, that's how I came to be interested in Advaita or non-duality. Throughout my childhood I struggled with the conventional concept of god and questioned worship resulting in many arguments and rebelling towards atheism, only to come across the question that opened doors to the immensity of the intangible beyond - “Is this all there is to life?”

Reading *Here and Now* by Eckhart Tolle was the beginning of

endless dominoes starting to fall. The book was such a breath of fresh air, it felt like the burdens that I was carrying without knowing that I was carrying them were being released. Then followed a series of retreats with meaningful experiences, deep diving into the philosophy of Tibetan Buddhism and Advaita through Ramana Maharishi, Nisargadatta Maharaj, J. Krishnamurti and many others.

I remember devouring texts such as Insight into Emptiness, Awakening Challenge, Diamond Sutra, Tibetan Book of the Dead, Nan Yar, Be Here Now etc. Deep meditations came with intense restlessness transforming into glimpses of the I AM followed by that “aaha” feeling. There was a realization that our perspective is constantly shifting - the mind constantly jumps from feeling excited to secure to be afraid in a very short time - different stories forming off the back of the same set of facts with multiple possibilities. Very easy to get lost in this kaleidoscope of changing narratives like shifting sands. Taking refuge in I AM is sometimes the only anchor available alongside the breath and sense perception. The more we practice, the more we observe this nature of MAYA, the more this veil thins, the more our burdens lessen, the more we feel liberated and capable of enjoying the dance of life!

This knowing does come with risks such as disillusionment however - mind, as usual tries to equate conventional framework of good life with this newfound reality and fails miserably! There is a huge difference between our perception of experience, which by its vicarious nature, only exists in theory, and the actual experience, very real, subjective and immediate. Thinking about making a parachute jump and stepping off of the ledge of the plane in real life are two very different things! Ambition, success, wealth and even happiness don't carry the meaning given by the society as we separate our perception from this experience of reality - how should then one govern one's affairs? Questions only give in to the traditional framework of mind based thinking resulting in anxiety! Grounding and anchoring our being in the I AM, our breath and immediate experience leads away from incorrect lines of enquiry and helps us find peace, joy and love. The whole process almost feels like watering seeds and watching the plants grow - very easy to give up early though if the seeds don't sprout.

I am still at the very beginning of my journey, realizing I don't know anything - but keen to grow with every experience gifted to me. The truth is HERE and NOW, although in order to really see, I cannot force it - I must trust the process, follow the teachings and shed the layers.

– Mayur Yadav



God takes the form of a Guru and appears to the devotee, teaches him the Truth and, moreover, purifies his mind by association.

There is no difference between
God, Guru and the Self!

– Bhagvan Shri Ramana Maharshi

Blessed by Aai Kalavati: A Seeker's Journey

॥ Om Namah Shivaya ॥

॥ Glory to Shri Sadgurunath Maharaj ॥

॥ Glory to the Most Revered Gurudevata Shri Kalavati Mata ॥

In my maternal home, from the time I was very young, a family named Moghe lived next door to us. In their household, the daily worship of Shri Kalavati Mata was performed with great devotion every morning and evening.

Moghe aunty would recite Mother's bhajans, aarti, and the *Balopasana* (a small prayer booklet) not silently, but clearly, melodiously, and in a resonant voice. Since we lived in a *chawl*, the devotional worship from their home would reach our ears distinctly, filling the surroundings with a sacred atmosphere.

Bhajans such as:

“The Guru is mine and I belong to the Guru
(*Guru mājhā mī gurūñchā*)

I am His servant across many births.
(*dāsa tyāñchā bahujanmīchā*)

My heart is now bound to His holy feet—
(*charaṇī jaḍalē mana hē mājhē*)

Upon whom else shall I place my burden now?”
(*ātā kavaṇā ghālū mī ōjhē*)

—and many others like “*There is no deity greater than the Guru*”

(*guruvāchunī daivata nāhī'*) would often be heard during these prayers. As I listened to those bhajans, I do not know why, but my eyes would fill with tears and begin to flow. Gradually, a deep fondness for those bhajans and aartis arose within me. Noticing this inclination of mine, Moghe Kaku would often take me along with her to temples. I too would eagerly look forward to going with her, happily accompanying her each time.

Unknowingly, my mind began to be drawn toward bhajans and worship. Through this, I started experiencing a deep sense of inner peace and quiet contentment. In our household, beyond the simple act of lighting a lamp before the deity in the morning and at dusk, there was little interest in religious practices. Formal worship, rituals, or devotional observances were hardly a part of our daily life.

As my childhood years faded into the past and my understanding deepened, I increasingly felt that I was truly blessed. To have Kalavati Aai as my Guru is indeed a rare blessing, and in that regard I consider myself very fortunate. However, I received Aai's formal grace only much later in life—after my marriage. Yet, I was blessed with many opportunities to serve her. While serving her, and even on several other occasions, I often felt a deep inner conviction that Aai was close by—even though she is no longer present in physical form.

Looking back, it often feels to me that from the time I began the worship of Aai, I have never felt any real sense of lack in life. There has never been a feeling that something was missing or incomplete. A quiet inner contentment seemed to arise naturally. For a long time, I had a deep desire to receive Aai's *Anugraha* (grace). Yet at the same time, a question would arise in my mind—how would it happen, and whether I would ever be fortunate enough to receive it. But, in her own effortless and compassionate way, Aai herself resolved this question. A few years after my marriage, we moved from Thane to the residential area in Dombivli. During that period, I used to visit the temple near D.N.C. School regularly for my devotional practices. One day, an announcement was made in the temple that those who wish to receive *Anugraha* should submit their names. Soon afterwards, seven of us sisters were sent to Belgaum for this sacred occasion. By

Aai's grace, I received the blessed opportunity to take *Anugraha* on the auspicious occasion of Maha Shivaratri in the year 2002, at Hari Mandir in Belgaum.

Param Pujya Aai explained the importance of prayer in such a beautiful and convincing way that now my mind does not feel at peace unless I perform my morning worship. Aai's teachings are profound and far-reaching; through them I have been able to imbibe many values and gradually begin to understand their deeper meaning. In simple words, offering prayer is the sacred duty of every human being. Prayer should be performed regularly and with love. It should not be motivated by the desire for worldly or heavenly pleasures. The only purpose of prayer should be to become one with Hari. In prayer, the inner spirit is far more important than outward form. Only when prayer arises from the depths of the heart does it truly reach the Divine.

To be freed from the *bhava-roga*—the affliction of worldly existence—one must observe the necessary disciplines of life. The mistakes committed by us should be humbly confessed before the Divine. One's habits, including food and daily conduct, should be marked by regularity and moderation. Care must be taken never to wound another by touching upon their sensitive weaknesses, nor should we indulge in fault-finding. The task of today should be completed today, without being postponed to tomorrow. One should refrain from gossip, intrigue, and needless involvement in disputes. Laziness should find no place in life, and time should not be squandered in idle talk. Likewise, the mind should not be allowed to harbour negative or harmful thoughts. At the same time, every person should perform at least some acts of selfless service, expecting no reward in return. Before God, the Guru, and the saints, one must always speak the truth and remain humble. Regular prayer gradually removes negative impressions and tendencies from the mind. It purifies past wrongdoings, dissolves harmful habits, and nurtures noble virtues within the heart. Through such prayer, the store of merit grows. Slowly, a person rises above the lower, animalistic tendencies and begins to embody the true dignity of human life. The heart becomes clear and pure like a spotless mirror. In such a state, even amid the most difficult circumstances, the inner

balance and integrity of the mind remain undisturbed.

In worldly life, joys and sorrows are bound to arise. Yet, through devotion to the Guru, we gain the strength to face them with courage. By this grace, the intensity of the hardships that come our way is also greatly reduced.

Through sincere worship, the illusions of the mind gradually dissolve. Such devotion unveils the radiant Inner Sun of the Self.

॥ Shri Sadgurunath Maharaj ki Jai ॥

– Smt. Shamal Vishnu Yadav
Thane, Maharashtra



Believe me, you are the Absolute.

Do not doubt ever !

I am telling you the Ultimate Truth
and stick to it accordingly.

– Shri Siddharameshwar Maharaj

Freedom Fighting Saint Madhavananda Prabhuji of Inchageri

When Nisargadatta Maharaj became widely known in the 1970s, many were surprised by his way of life. He lived as a householder in Bombay, smoked beedis and occasionally displayed intense anger. These traits challenged common expectations for what a spiritual master should look like.

The life of Sri Madhavananda Prabhuji raises similar questions. A contemporary of Nisargadatta and his guru-cousin, he descended from the same Navnath Inchageri lineage through Shri Bhausaheb Maharaj and then Shri Girimalleshwar Maharaj.

Prabhuji was a celibate who lived in sustained meditative absorption, yet boldly organized mass political resistance, and was repeatedly imprisoned during the independence struggle.

I first encountered Prabhuji's story during a recent visit to Inchageri, where a full-sized painting on the monastery wall prompted my curiosity. What started as a brief inquiry grew into an attempt to reconstruct his life from Kannada, Marathi, and English sources.

As with many semi-legendary figures, facts may be amplified or subtly reshaped through devotional retelling. The following account therefore distinguishes documented events from traditional narratives where possible.

EARLY LIFE

Madhavananda Prabhuji was born on 2 November 1915 in Hubballi, Karnataka, as Mahadevappa Murugod. He was the second son of Shivappa Murugod and Kamma. His father, also known as the lineage-master Shivaprabhu Maharaj, was a disciple of Shri Girimalleshwar Maharaj, which placed Mahadevappa in close contact with a spiritual master and disciplined practice from an early age.

Accounts suggest that he reached spiritual fertility remarkably early. Several accounts narrate him receiving the *Guru-Mantra* between the ages three and eight—unusually early for an aspirant. Whatever the precise age, his childhood was marked by an inward pull that made conventional schooling unsuitable. The education for livelihood had zero appeal for him next to *Dhyanyoga*, the path of meditative self-knowledge. Initially, this inward pull led him to leave home on school nights and meditate in the cremation grounds. Soon after, the increasing pull towards meditation eventually culminated in him leaving school around the fourth standard (around age 10) to seek extended solitude in caves, self-built leaf huts, or adjacent to Shri Gurulingajangam Maharaj's tomb as per his Guru's instructions.

One story, often repeated in the tradition, illustrates both his discipline and the community's early recognition of it. During a foot pilgrimage from Hubballi to Inchagiri, Shri Girimalleshwar Maharaj instructed his disciples to maintain uninterrupted awareness of the *Guru-Mantra* with each breath. After several days, he requested those who had followed the instruction perfectly to stand. Only the twelve-year-old Mahadevappa rose. Observing this unwavering concentration, the Guru is said to have called him “the true manifestation of the Divine”. From that time, people began addressing him as *Devaru* (“the Divine One”).

One source places his realisation at the age of fourteen, following a period of intense austerity and solitary practice. Others describe him as spiritually realised from childhood, or an “incarnate man”. While the exact timing remains uncertain, most accounts agree that his reputation for spiritual maturity emerged while he was still very young.

Whether interpreted symbolically or literally, such stories reflect how early Mahadevappa was perceived not merely as devout, but as inwardly mature in a way that exceeded his years.

ROLE IN THE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE

The political awakening of Madhavananda Prabhuji unfolded alongside India's intensifying struggle for independence. After the declaration of Complete Independence (*Purna Swaraj*) on 26 January 1930 and the launch of the 'Civil Disobedience Movement' resistance spread across the nation. It was during this period that fourteen-year-old Prabhuji first became politically active in the devout village of Inchageri.

Over the following years, his political engagement deepened with the explicit blessing of his Guru. By the late 1930s, he had mobilised thousands from Karnataka and Maharashtra to attend the 1938 Indian National Congress session at Haripura. In one account, on the third day of the Congress, Prabhuji stood up and delivered a speech declaring that "Freedom is our birthright; religious freedom can be attained only through political freedom," a striking declaration for a monk still in his twenties.

Through this work, Prabhuji came into contact with leaders such as Subhas Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi. Impressed with his work, Bose secretly met with him in the Inchageri lineage ashram in Hubballi. With Gandhiji's permission, Prabhuji began peaceful mass protests in Inchageri and surrounding villages in 1941, leading to his first arrest.

Following the escalation of the 1942 'Quit India' protests, the resistance of his group—comprising thousands of men and women—took on a militant approach of crippling British infrastructure: railway stations destroyed, local police stations looted and then burned, goods wagons derailed, telegraph wires cut, and large treasury funds seized. Notably, although two gun factories were established in Kottalgi and Sonyal for self-defense, his group was consistently committed to minimising human harm.

Such actions eventually led to repeated arrests. Over his lifetime,

Prabhuji is said to have been imprisoned twenty-seven times . He reportedly referred to prison as the *“Guru’s house and God’s temple,”* welcoming the space for uninterrupted meditation. Even while incarcerated, he continued his leadership covertly, and several prison officers are said to have become his disciples during this period.

That a celibate spiritual teacher should also be linked with sabotage and resistance may seem surprising. Yet it cannot be denied that his moral direction and leadership were the result of his surrender to what he saw as the highest good.

POST-INDEPENDENCE ACTIVISM

India’s independence in 1947 did not end Prabhuji’s activism. With British Rule gone, the subcontinent remained politically divided among hundreds of princely states. Prabhuji actively mobilised youth and campaigned for a more unified nation under the slogan “Desha Seva Isha Seva” (serve the nation to serve God)—supporting the integration of the Hyderabad princely state, resisting Portuguese rule in Goa, and advocating for the unification of Karnataka. The risks of such work remained high: members of his group were shot during the Hyderabad resistance, Prabhuji himself was beaten by officers in Goa, and during the Karnataka unification movement he undertook a 21-day “fast unto death” .

As he grew disillusioned with what he saw as the corruption and self-interest of post-independence politics, Prabhuji founded the Lok Sevak Sangh Party to contest and veto what he considered substandard governance. In 1964, he also joined the land-gift movement (Sarvodaya Bhoodan) inspired by Vinoba Bhave, campaigning for the redistribution of land in the name of universal upliftment. Travelling on foot from village to village across India, his activist group helped secure thousands of acres of fallow land for landless villagers

One frequently recounted episode illustrates the uncompromising character of his methods. In one account, his group detained a local landowner, Umrani, and pressured him to donate most of his land by feeding him only dry and heavily spiced food until he agreed. The

story, often cited by devotees, reflects the intensity with which Prabhuji pursued the ideals of the Sarvodaya *Bhoodan* movement.

IMPLEMENTATION OF HIS VISION IN INCHAGERI

Though he was noted for his political resistance, Madhavananda Prabhuji remained a monastic leader responsible for ritual, teaching, and the spiritual rhythm of the community. His days followed a demanding discipline: leading four daily *bhajans* (devotional singing), delivering discourses, meditating for three hours, receiving visitors, managing monastery affairs, and maintaining continuous repetition of the sacred mantra with each breath. Three times a year he also led week-long *Saptahas*—intensive spiritual gatherings that drew thousands for prayers, discourses, and communal meals that fed both devotees and the poor.

Yet, he incorporated modern ideas into his traditional monastic duties. While imprisoned in Nashik during the independence struggle, Prabhuji encountered socialist thinkers such as S. A. Dange, whose emphasis on equality left a lasting impression. Drawing from communism as well as Vinoba Bhave's *Sarvodaya*, the monastery—under his leadership after 1967—implemented collective ownership and land regeneration.

Under the principles of the 12th-century sage Basavanna, his vision of equality extended to caste and faith. During his lifetime, he conducted more than 25,000 inter-caste and inter-faith marriages at the monastery, involving Lingayat, Dalit, Brahmin, Muslim, Christian communities, and more. Needless to say, criticism and pushback followed, to which Prabhuji responded by marrying his own grand-niece, Kalammadevi, to a Muslim man. Other efforts included widow and *Devdasi* marriages, shelter for the homeless, and campaigns against superstition, opposing alcohol, and prohibition of cow-slaughter.

Such efforts prompted the visit of Arun Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's grandson. He inspected the agricultural developments and egalitarian communal lifestyle. To quote from his Imprint newspaper article on

Inchageri :

While the rest of India is shrouded in the blinding darkness of caste and religion, let us all hope that such bold experiments in national life not only survive and grow, but also spread everywhere very soon.

MADHAVANANDA PRABHUJI'S CHARACTER

Deeds and achievements show only part of his character. Despite an unusual determination and an ability to bend events toward his aims, accounts consistently portray him as personally austere and resistant to praise. When *Mahamangalarti* was sung in his praise, he scolded the devotees. When devotees tried to bow to his feet, he told them instead to “go and meditate.” He refused titles such as *Samarth Sadguru* (all-powerful and true Guru), to wear the saffron robes of a monk, to ride in palanquins during processions, or even be photographed. Wearing only local khadi fabric—sometimes torn—he was known to clean wells and latrines, manually farm, or spin Khadi. After independence, he also declined the government pension offered to freedom fighters.

As a spiritual teacher, his sermons are described as having a calm, serious, yet mesmerising flow that captivated listeners. With simple words and illustrations, his expositions on complex Vedantic philosophical concepts from holy texts such as *Dasbodh* or *Manache Shlok* reached even to uneducated masses.

For many followers, such simplicity only reinforced their conviction that he possessed unusual spiritual depth. Since that proclamation by Girimalleshwar Maharaj in his youth, devotees often referred to him as a “moving God,” citing his constant meditative absorption and compassion toward all who approached him.

One story recounts that when thieves were caught stealing from the monastery, Prabhuji ordered them not to be beaten or imprisoned but made to work for fifteen days, turning punishment into discipline and reform.

His father, Shivaprabhu Maharaj, is also said to have regarded him with unusual reverence. One account describes the elder witnessing

a snake coiled around the young Mahadevappa's neck while he sat absorbed in meditation in the cremation grounds—an event that strengthened his belief that his son possessed extraordinary spiritual stature. In later years he reportedly surprised devotees by touching his own forehead with the dust from Prabhuji's footsteps.

Although Prabhuji formally became head of the monastery only after his father's passing away in 1967, for decades before that his father considered him as the authority and listened to his commands for running the monastery. His response, if anyone asked, was "I know what He is".

In keeping with the reputation of a "walking God," miracle stories circulated widely among devotees. These include claims that he could evade bullets, transform hidden weapons into fruit to avoid British searches, influence judges to reduce prison sentences, or even revive the wounded through spiritual power. Such accounts are presented here not as historical proof, but as an indication of how extraordinary he appeared to those that lived around him.

DEATH AND LEGACY

Madhavananda Prabhuji's life of service to humanity demanded constant travel, irregular meals, and little sleep. Over time, his physical frame grew weary, yet he never paused in his mission. On 25 May 1980, while returning from a *Saptah* (spiritual festival), he dropped the body in Hubballi.

The seeds of his work continue to bear fruit: in the three schools he established, the dozens of *Jnanayoga* (path of wisdom) ashrams he founded, and the living community at Inchageri, which still carries forward his experiment in collective ownership. In recognition of his contributions, the Karnataka government posthumously awarded him the **Suvarna Karnataka Rajyotsava Award** in 2006.

His presence also endures in subtler ways—in the hundreds of spiritual discourses now shared on YouTube, in the daily bhajans sung within his 80-foot-tall Samadhi temple at Inchageri, in the film *Kranthiyogi Mahadevaru* that recounts his life, and in the pendants

and household altars of the thousands who continue unabated in their devotion.

In an age that often demanded a choice between saintliness and revolution, Prabhuji refused the distinction. For him, the highest upliftment involved both spiritual and political liberation. “Jai Jagat,” he would say: may the whole world be uplifted.

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