

Nisargadatta on Meditation
~ An excerpt from *I Am That*
Talks with Nisargadatta Maharaj

Q: In meditation, who meditates, the person or the witness?

M: Meditation is a deliberate attempt to pierce into the higher states of consciousness and finally go beyond it. The art of meditation is the art of shifting the focus of attention to ever subtler levels, without losing one's grip on the levels left behind. In a way it is like having death under control. One begins with the lowest levels: social circumstances, customs and habits; physical surroundings, the posture and the breathing of the body, the senses, their sensations and perceptions; the mind, its thoughts and feelings; until the entire mechanism of personality is grasped and firmly held. The final stage of meditation is reached when the sense of identity goes beyond the 'I-am-so-and-so', beyond 'so-I-am', beyond 'I-am-the-witness-only', beyond 'there-is', beyond all ideas into the impersonally personal pure being. But you must be energetic when you take to meditation. It is definitely not a part-time occupation. Limit your interests and activities to what is needed for you and your dependents' barest needs. Save all your energies and time for breaking the wall your mind had built around you. Believe me, you will not regret.

Q: How do I come to know that my experience is universal?

M: At the end of your meditation all is known directly, no proofs whatsoever are required. Just as every drop of the ocean carries the taste of the ocean, so does every moment carry the taste of eternity. Definitions and descriptions have their place as useful incentives for further search, but you must go beyond them into what is undefinable and indescribable, except in negative terms.

After all, even universality and eternity are mere concepts, the opposites of being place and time-bound. Reality is not a concept, nor the manifestation of a concept. It has nothing to do with concepts. Concern yourself with your mind, remove its distortions and impurities. Once you had the taste of your own self, you will find it everywhere and at all times. Therefore, it is so important that you should come to it. Once you know it, you will never lose it.

But you must give yourself the opportunity through intensive, even arduous meditation.

Q: What exactly do you want me to do?

M: Give your heart and mind to brooding over the 'I am', what is it, how is it, what is its source, its life, its meaning. It is very much like digging a well. You reject all that is not water, till you reach the life-giving spring.

Q: How shall I know that I am moving in the right direction?

M: By your progress in intentness, in clarity and devotion to the task.

Q: We, Europeans, find it very difficult to keep quiet. The world is too much with us.

M: Oh, no, you are dreamers too. We differ only in the contents of our dreams. You are after perfection -- in the future. We are intent on finding it -- in the now. The limited only is perfectible. The unlimited is already perfect. You are perfect, only you don't know it. Learn to know yourself and you will discover wonders.

All you need is already within you, only you must approach your self with reverence and love. Self-condemnation and self-distrust are grievous errors. Your constant flight from pain and search for pleasure is a sign of love you bear for your self, all I plead with you is this: make love of your self perfect. Deny yourself nothing -- glue your self infinity and eternity and discover that you do not need them; you are beyond.