



Satsang
with Advaita Master

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On the Importance of One Teacher, the Unimportance of "Energies" and A Guided Self-inquiry

(Method – Part 2)

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ONE TEACHER

Before I talk about the method of Self-inquiry, and this would be the second Satsang devoted to the method of Self-inquiry, there are two items that need to be discussed concerning happenings in our own Satsang.

Rajiv and I both noticed that many of you are asking each of us separately the same questions, and seeking answers to those questions separately.

This isn't a good idea, for two reasons.

During a previous Satsang, I mentioned a preconception that many people have, and that is that all Jnanis are speaking from the same playbook, so to speak. That is, many of you believe that we all have identical knowledge, and the answers to any questions from any two separate Jnanis will not be inconsistent, and in fact might be identical.

Generally, our answers will not be identical and may even be inconsistent. Rajiv and I have very different spiritual backgrounds and awakening experiences. You are likely to get different answers to the same question about almost anything from us, meaning you'll either be confused, or you'll choose the answer you like and ignore the one you don't like. This is not unlike a child going to each parent separately and asking that parent a question, or asking permission, and getting a different answer from each parent, and thereby using one parent against the other. That is, if you don't like the answer from Rajiv, you can use my answer, and vice versa.

It is best to pick one source for your spiritual answers, otherwise you can grow quite confused. Even the answers you get from me over a period of time will be inconsistent. This is the nature of words and the mind, time and place. What was true one day may not be true two months later because the situation is different, you are different, and I am different.

Emerson once said, "Foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." Yet, spiritual students often try to make every statement of every spiritual teacher throughout history consistent, and get confused if they're not consistent. Context is everything; the specific phrasing is almost irrelevant.

For example: Many people ask me what Robert meant when he said "so-and-so." You have to understand that each teacher has a different message, from a slightly different viewpoint. Robert's experiences were different from my own, and although I listened to him for seven or eight years consistently, after 1997 I went my own way and developed my own teaching paradigm and style. When you ask me to explain what Robert meant, I have to leave the paradigm *I'm* teaching from, and shift however slightly to Robert's paradigm, however well I may remember it, and explain a phrase from *that* paradigm in terms of my words here and now. This is not fair to me or to Robert, because my best teaching comes from my own paradigm, not Robert's, and his best teaching came from his own paradigm, not mine.

I tend to be far more analytical and emotional than Robert. Therefore I would explain a phrase of his differently than would he, if he were to elaborate on what he meant. It would be far better for you to try to understand Robert's concepts, or Nisargadatta's concepts, or Ramana's concepts *within the context of the Satsang that phrase occurred in*, rather than to ask me twenty years after he said it, what

the phrase meant to Robert when he said it in that context. I won't be able to do a very good job of explaining Robert compared to the job Robert did of explaining Robert, at *that* time, in *that* Satsang, in the context of *that* Satsang, and the Satsangs immediately before and after. **Context is everything.**

The same holds true of someone asking Rajiv what Edji meant when he said "so-and-so," or when asking questions about the mind, or about practice.

We have different teaching styles. Rajiv likes to talk in terms of stages or steps. I don't. In my teachings there are no steps, no levels, no progressions. Rajiv talks about dissolving in the heart. I don't. To me, the "heart center" does not exist. Rajiv talks more about love, while I talk about knowledge. He talks about beingness, while I talk about the "I" and the "I-sense" which point within. These are quite different approaches. Neither is more right or wrong than the other; it's just that they're different approaches. Nisargadatta's teacher was into stages. Nisargadatta wasn't. It's just different styles.

You have to understand that words are almost useless when it comes to conveying spiritual knowledge. True spiritual knowledge comes from looking within and understanding yourself within your own time, place and context. You have to become the parent, rather than asking a parent what your experience means. You have to find your own meaning. You have to do the exploring, and it's best not to ask anyone else what your experience means because your experience is your experience, not mine or Rajiv's.

This is important. If you ask us to comment on your experience, you might get the wrong advice for where you are here and now, because neither of us may have had your particular experience, or we had a similar experience a long time ago, which I may poorly remember, and when I try to elucidate yours from our perspective, or Rajiv's perspective, or my perspective, either of us could make a mistake and lead you astray.

I practiced Self-inquiry for over forty years. I have no memory of a lot of the things I went through over that period of time. And people sometimes ask me what their experiences mean and I have no idea, not unless the experience is quite clear and stable, but random experiences mean almost nothing.

When it comes to spirituality, words and concepts are best avoided altogether. One should just look within and greet whatever you experience with open arms of

love and acceptance, and from that stance, everything will be revealed. Too much external curiosity, too much questioning, means you will continue living in your mind and never escape it at all. The way to escape the mind is to turn it off and just watch your sense of “I.”

There are many teachers like Ken Wilber and some of the other ones he loved that just have theory, after theory, after theory, and they’re spellbinding, in terms of all the theories and concepts they bring together, but this is not spirituality. This is philosophy. This is poetic philosophy. And it may sound great, and it may make you swoon in terms of all the concepts, but there’s no Self-realization in this kind of knowledge.

The beginning and end of spirituality for those who practice Self-inquiry is to find the sense of “I,” the feeling that arises when you use the word “I.” Just say the word “I,” and the feeling of “I” arises momentarily. Find that sense of “I,” get into it and stay there. Follow that “I” wherever it goes. This is called “abiding in the ‘I,’” and I’ll talk more about this in a minute.

The second reason not to go back and forth between the two of us is that it doubles our work and the things we have to do. Already Rajiv’s business is suffering, because, unlike me, he has not yet learned to say “no” to requests on his time.

I hope this is clear. Please just choose one of us to ask questions about your own spiritual practice and what to do. It’s okay to attend separate Satsangs, but choose one of us as your primary source of questions and answers about you, rather than going back and forth. Already many of you are too distracted by non-spiritual things, and will really just suffer by creating further distractions because of different teachings.

ENERGIES

I have recently posted on my blog that far too many New Age spiritual people spend altogether too much time worrying about the health of their bodies or minds. The more time you spend worrying about your bodies or your minds, the less time you are exploring your self – which has nothing to do with your body or your mind. And as long as you are worried about your body and your mind, that

sense of “I” will always be rather trivial and secondary. If you are to awaken, you must make that sense of “I” your primary point of investigation every moment of every day, until the “I” sense, the subject, pervades all of your mind, and you are abiding in your self always.

In our own Satsang, we have a related problem, and this is an emphasis on “energies,” whether it be healing energies, dark energies, light energies, *kundalini* energies etc. Focusing on these energies, again, takes you away from your self. These energies occur in this world, which we are trying to take you beyond.

You are beyond all of these energies just as you are beyond the world, but the more you fool around with these energies, concentrate on these energies, develop these energies, and use these energies, the more you’re moving away from your true Self and just re-involving yourself in another aspect of this world, some of which you may consider spiritual, but it’s still of this world.

Really, don't worry about these energies so much. If you want to use them to heal your body, or someone else's body, realize this is a worldly activity, and is going to keep you pinned in this world unless the healing is done 100% from compassion for another’s pain rather than as an exercise of your talent.

Rajiv and I are trying to take you entirely beyond this world, beyond the relative, beyond the mind, to the Absolute; and you can't find the Absolute if you're hanging around light and dark energies, healing energies, and other dimensions of energetic projections. Leave this stuff alone unless you're forced to involve yourself in it, or you do it with a total selflessness. If it’s done with total selflessness it’s okay, if not done too much or too often. I want to take you entirely beyond both your normal, everyday world as well as beyond these energies, which are still in this world.

I would say the same thing about any interest of yours, such as your job, your family, some talent you have. They should no longer be your priority interest.

Investigating your own self must take priority if you want to go free. Of course, if you are merely curious, you can do anything you want. Most people who get into spirituality, however driven they feel at first, generally are just curious. After a few months or years, the curiosity fades as well as their practice.

I became very involved with various energies and states during my first three or four years of *sadhana*. I could feel the energies everywhere, emanating from trees, from the moon, from electric wires buried in walls, from the magnetic currents of the earth. I was incredibly sensitive to all of these energies, but thank God when I went to Mount Baldy and learned correct meditation from Zen Master Sasaki, all of the energies disappeared, leaving me in *samadhi*. Those energy sensitivities never came back, and no longer diverted my attention from the most important aspect of my *sadhana*, namely *me*, as the subject, as the Source.

SELF-INQUIRY – Method (Part 2)

Now I want to talk about the method again of Self-inquiry, as set forth in “The Path of Sri Ramana” (Part One,) written by Sadhu Om. I highly recommend you getting this book, as well as “The Nisargadatta Gita.” You can buy them both, either from LuLu.com, or from an ashram in the Carolinas, AHAM.com.

The essence of the Self-inquiry practice, according to Ramana, is to raise the sense of “I,” namely the feeling that accompanies the word “I,” cultivate it, and continually rest in it until it pervades your universe.

“I...”

“I...”

“I am...”

“I...”

Say that to yourself.

What feeling arises?

Stay there.

Staying in that “I” and looking for the source of that “I” will open up one’s inner world revealing the empty space that contains everything, internal and external. That open empty space gradually is revealed to be oneness. There is no difference between the void emptiness within and the empty space without. Then the “I” will

disappear and you will become everything — and nothing. You will become everything by becoming nothing.

Many people ask me about their experiences, and whether they are experiencing the “I.” It's as if many people cannot find an “I” to experience. I can only believe this is true because they're looking for something exotic or blissful, or expect that seeing an “I” is an end-stage experience, not easily available without practice.

But everyone experiences this “I.” If somebody asks you how you're feeling, you respond, “I feel so-and-so.” Immediately as soon as you use the word “I,” there arises that first person sense of being the subject, “I” — that which everything happens to.

The “I” is nothing extraordinary, it is just that feeling of “I” that arises at the moment you say “I.” Don't look for some mysterious transcendental “I.” Just look for that feeling that you are — “I am,” “I.” All mysteries lie in unveiling that very ordinary “I” feeling. Don't be in a hurry to get to the end. Just stay with the “I;” or alternatively, look for the source where the “I” arises and disappears, which is emptiness, nothingness, the Void.

There is an apparent difference in Self-inquiry as outlined by Nisargadatta, who states you have to find the “I,” or the “I am” experience, and just stay there, as opposed to Ramana Maharshi, who advises you to find the “I-thought”, or the sense of personal “I,” and to seek the source of the “I” sense and the I-thought, which is the Void.

This is partly due to their separate belief systems, and how they use the word “I.”

Nisargadatta considers that “I” sense in the same way that the Self psychologists do, or Self psychoanalysts I should say, like Kohut and Kernberg and the others, and this would be as a sense of presence associated with both conscious and unconscious images and memories, as well as the I-thought.

So, there are three separate parts to the “I” for Nisargadatta:

- The sense of presence or existence (and Jean Klein talks about presence);
- The images, both conscious and unconscious of the memories, which form a complex which the Self psychoanalysts call the “Self objects.” These are internal processes and internal dreams, internal images which coalesce into a form which we call “I,” the “I” sense;

- And then the I-thought itself, which is thinking associated with these images and this complex which is associated with the sense of presence.

So, you have 3-in-1: The I-thought; the images and memories; and the sense of presence. And he wants you to get in there, and just stay there until it all evaporates and reveals its inner structure by destroying itself.

For Maharaj, the correct practice is to sink into that sense of presence, or the “I-ness,” and by staying there, learn all about the falseness of this “I”, which at some point disappears leaving emptiness, and the knowledge or knower of emptiness, as the true Self.

The knowledge of emptiness is the true Self. Knowing is the true Self. You are knowledge, and as such, have no existence in this world as an object. You’re pure knowing.

Ramana, on the other hand, regarded the “I” sense and I-thought sort of like street signs showing you the way to the deepest levels of the Self, the Atman, and eventually to the Absolute, or Brahman, which again is emptiness, but even beyond that, you as the knower or knowledge of emptiness. You are pure knowledge, and nothing more. Put that in your pipe and smoke it!

This is quite different from any kind of Western philosophy whatsoever. All that you are is knowledge, and some say you are the knower, which again is creating a kind of object. But you’re not any object; you’re the subject.

Therefore, Ramana’s and Nisargadatta’s Self-inquiry methods are somewhat different.

Ramana recommended that you ask yourself the question, "Who am I?" Being dumber than the average person, I took that to mean that one mucked around inside of myself searching for an “I,” whether looking for some entity in the inner Void, looking for where the I-thought came from or went away to, or generally just searching throughout my inner experience for an entity that was me.

This is exactly what one should do. Be dumb, and just look without checking and thinking. Go deep inside. Find the “I,” and find out where it points towards, the “I” source, where it arises and disappears.

Once again, I recommend reading chapters 7 and 8 of “The Path of Sri Ramana” (Part One) by Sadhu Om. This explains everything you need to know about

Ramana's form of Self-inquiry.

In this form of Self-inquiry, you raise the feeling of "I" as the first person, as the subject, as the core center of yourself to which everything happens. The I-thought, along with the sense of presence, which is like a cloud of knowingness that interpenetrates everything, is the ego. And then you look for the source of this ego complex. Where does it come from? Where does it disappear to? Where does it arise from? First you find it, then you look for the source. And by that, I mean where it arises from, and where it disappears to. And it arises for everybody when they get up in the morning, and it disappears every time they go to bed at night.

You then ask yourself, "Who experiences such-and-such?" Whatever you're doing, "Who's doing this?" Turn your attention around and look for the "I," the subject. The phrase "Who am I?" automatically turns your attention inward, towards an apparent source somewhere inside of an inner nothingness. You must become very familiar with that feeling of "I," or "I am," as well as the act of turning the attention around from outside of the skin to inside the skin, into the imaginary space where all thoughts and subjective images reside. That imaginary space inside has to become as clear and translucent as the external space that contains all of the world, until they are one.

Turning the attention inward looking for the "I," the feeling "I am," the sense of presence, and looking for the source of this, gradually opens and expands the inner world until it contains everything, inside and out.

One does not simply repeat, "Who am I?" over and over again like a mantra, but you should ask the question with a deep inquiring mind once, and then follow the attention inwards, towards the apparent source of "I-ness." You will feel an "I-ness," and that "I-ness" will point in a direction – inwards – and you just follow that direction inwards. Like for Ramana, it was a street sign saying, "That way..." (*pointing inwards*) "That way..." "That way..." Just follow that direction. Just keep your eyes on that direction, keep your thoughts on that direction, keep your hearing on that direction.

"Who's the hearer?"

"Who's the listener?"

"Who's the feeler?"

“Who’s the sentient person?”

As an adjunct to this practice, when you go to bed, gently probe inside yourself for that sense of “I” and where it comes from. Just stay there resting in this emptiness, and watch one's sense of existence, and watch to where it disappears when sleep comes and destroys consciousness. Watch the “I” slip away.

As often as possible during the day, while sitting or laying down, look for the sense of “I,” a sense of “I am,” a sense of presence. Just watch it, watch where the “I” arises. Watch where the I-thought arises, and where it passes away. You'll find it arises from emptiness, and passes away into emptiness. You can actually feel it. If you watch the “I” thought, you can observe it coming out of emptiness, and you can observe it heading towards emptiness and disappearing.

When you wake up in the morning too, after you develop the talent and the concentration necessary, you can watch the I-sense, the ego, your life, the sentience rising out of your heart and into your head and lighting up the universe! It sneaks up from inside from your heart center, through the mouth, and through the throat into your mind, and all of a sudden it expands and explodes into the entire world of phenomena.

Then in the evening, when you're going to sleep, watch the coming and going of the mind and consciousness itself. Watch as the mind and consciousness disappear, and you pass from full consciousness to sleep. Make this a habit. All during the day search for the coming and going of the “I” sense, the I-thought, consciousness.

All of this slips out of the brain and down into the body, into the heart, and the mind disappears and the lights go out and you sleep. It's very hard to learn how to do this. It takes a long time, long practice and a constant practice of introversion. So you can begin to witness these thoughts, and you can witness the

comings and goings of consciousness, and of the self, and of the “I” thought. Gradually, you will recognize that the only thing that seems stable in all of your experience both waking and sleeping is a sense of emptiness, the Void. Yet even that emptiness is not you. The Void is not you. You are That which is beyond all. You are that which has the knowledge of the Void. You are the looker, so to speak, who is watching the coming and going of the “I,” the I-thought, the sense of presence, consciousness, and sleep.

Gradually your identification will change from that of being part of some subjective entity embedded within your brain and flesh, until you identify with the totality of consciousness, which is pervaded by emptiness as a constant, and that consciousness is much larger than your body, and in fact contains all of your experience of the external world, your body, dreams, and sleep.

This is the way of Ramana Maharshi.

The way of Nisargadatta is slightly different. With him rather than finding the source of the “I,” which Ramana calls “abiding in the real I,” in emptiness, instead you find the sense of presence, the “I,” and stay there, abiding in that very primitive sense of the personal “I,” the very rudimentary sense of “I” that arises when a person starts using the words “I” and “me” and identifies as a separate and discrete entity.

Then, over a long period of time of dwelling in that “I” sense, it disappears, again revealing the Void, sometimes the background sense of presence, sometimes a second Void, what Bernadette Roberts calls the “Void of Voids,” the absolute emptiness of the eternal God.

Then again eventually comes the recognition that you’re not the Void either, that the knowledge of the Void is entirely separate from the Void and **you are it** – pure knowledge, without form or existence, entirely beyond the world and time.

Let us try this now. Let us try to find the “I.”

Relax. Sit back in your chair. (Try to remain awake, too. It’s so easy to slip into sleep when you’re totally relaxed.)

Now, ask yourself – “Who am I?”

Turn your attention around and look inward. Look deep within the darkness of your inner space to see what you can see. Merely asking the question “Who am I?” causes the attention to look inward, and towards the source of the “I” automatically.

What do you see? Just stay there. Experience the nothingness, the emptiness. Here nothing exists, only silence and only emptiness. If thoughts arise, watch from where they arise. When a thought arises, attend to it for a second, and then drop it, and watch where it passes away. Go deeper, much deeper into yourself, into that emptiness, into that darkness.

Eventually the inner world will open up and the emptiness will be a clear, lit Void. It will be brilliantly bright, illuminating everything. The Void is filled with light, but it takes a while to see it. It just takes practice. It takes a long deal of practice! It took me, maybe, six months, but that was because I was practicing ten, twelve, fourteen hours a day. Practice less and then it could take years.

This is the whole of the practice – raising the sense of “I,” the sense of being the subject, the first person, you, and just abide there, resting there, making this your total state, pervading everything else. Just hold onto that state.

From this steady-state experience, you begin to watch the mind come and go, the world come and go, consciousness come and go. Just staying in that sense of emptiness, watch everything come and go. Soon that will be your primary position – the unmoving center, the core experience of “I-ness,” what Ramana called the “I-I.”

One just learns to abide in that sense of “I,” feeling that sense of “I” all the time, and from that sense of first-person, of “me,” to watch everything come and go, to watch the mind and ego slip away into nothingness, leaving oneself in empty-minded consciousness. It is within the passages between the various psychological and spiritual states that the truths of the teachings lie.

Someone asked me about Robert using the word, the “gap,” and that’s appropriate. It’s the gap, the emptiness that opens up passing between the various states like sleep to waking, from sleep to dream, and dream to awaking. There’s a moment of stillness in there where there’s total emptiness that extends everywhere. So, you have to be already open to that experience to go into the gap and find that emptiness that pervades everything and the light that pervades everything. This is a separate practice.

All of these practices, you can see, fit together. The more formal is to do the “Who am I?” And then at the same time remaining in that sense of “I-ness,” you develop a steadfastness, a power, becoming a mountain from that position, the first position, the center of gravity, your primary sentient state.

One gradually learns of a more fundamental core state of self that remains untouched by these transitions between sleep, dream, waking mind, and the samadhis. This is usually a sudden revelation, but not necessarily. You notice sleep has come and gone, but you have not come and gone. You were untouched by the change. You did not come and go, the states did.

If the states of beingness and non-beingness come and go, but do not touch you, they are not you. That means you are there always, whether you are conscious of them at this core level of sentience, or not. You are beyond both beingness and non-existence.

These teachings will come to you either suddenly with a specific awakening experience, or gradually, cumulatively, as hundreds or thousands of witnessed transitions without one's sense of self changing at all, until you recognize your immortality and separateness – all of these experienced states. You are beyond space and time and existence altogether.

Now, let's go there again, deep into your beingness.

I will ask you, "Who are you?"

Instead of formulating a verbal answer, turn your attention around and look within.

What do you see?

Emptiness? Solid darkness?

Points of light in the third-eye area?

Then I'll ask, "Where are you?" Turn your attention towards the listener, the hearer, the responder. When you find the direction to look or hear in, just focus towards that target and hold your attention still.

Who are you? Jo-Ann, who are you?

Andrea, who are you?

Tina, who are you?

Where are you?

Those words should elicit a feeling and a direction to point your attention – automatically – and just follow it.

Who is hearing me?

Follow that direction, follow it.

Who are you? Grasp that sense of "I."

Nathan, who are you?

Santosh, who are you?

Naturally, in the future, any time you want to do this meditation again, you can just play this Satsang with the questions I ask and just listen to it, then sort of drop out. Let the words take you deep within.