

Edji Satsang Transcript



Eaten up in the Emptiness: My Life with Robert, and Further Readings from Nisargadatta

September 24, 2011 – Online Satsang

Tonight we have a treat.

Kavita sent us some recordings of Yogananda, made in the 1940s. My first teacher was Yogananda. I think I was 14 at the time. I remember I sent away for this long-playing record at the time, the 33 rpm one.

The three chants I remember most were *O God Beautiful, In the Temple of Silence* and *I Will Be Thine Always*. I remember hearing *O God Beautiful* for the first time. I remember the hairs on my arms stood on end.

I felt such love and ecstasy.

Recently, Jo-Ann and some of the others—Tina, Joan—have heard these chants, and Janet. Most have loved them... after a little prodding. [Chuckles]

I think Jo-Ann had to listen to them for about ten or fifteen times before she started loving them. Joan loved them right away. I do not think Janet will ever like them. But we will see.

Remember, Yogananda is my first teacher, and Robert's second teacher. Robert stayed with him for six or eight months, until Yogananda kicked Robert out and told him to go to India [to see Ramana Maharshi, circa 1946.]

I want you to listen to these chants not with your ears, but with your heart. Listen to the words. Listen to his passion. His voice sounds a lot like Seung Sahn Sunim [Korean Zen master with whom Edji studied.]

He is 100% behind every word he speaks. His whole being is in every word that he sings. Such passion—you can hear it. The words are divine. All about God, and loving God, your beloved—I will be thine always. And how God appears in the various realms of nature, and the various parts of human existence, as service and as bliss.

There is something about these old recordings. The person who plays the harmonium is such an expert. The harmonium is breathing along with Yogananda. You can hear the expertness in the touch of the harmonium. And whoever is doing the drums, does it perfectly. There are two drums—one is done perfectly.

I learned to chant these both in English and Bengali when I was 14. I never forgot them. Over the years I have remembered them. But now I hear them again, and it is such a delight.

Now prepare yourself to love these. [Laughs]

Can we have *O God Beautiful* and *In the Temple of Silence*, with a pause in-between?

[Chanting—*O God Beautiful*]

Now, instead of the *In the Temple of Silence*, which is great, how about *I Will Be Thine Always*?

Listen to this one. Listen again with your heart. He is talking as a devotee to his guru, and the guru is talking to him as his devotee.

[Chanting—*I Will Be Thine Always*]

And the last one, *In the Temple of Silence*.

[Chanting—*In the Temple of Silence*]

I wanted to tell you a little about my relationship with Robert, since the whole concept of guru-student relationship has come up for me again. I met Robert in 1989, at a little satsang he had in Beverly Hills. There must have been five or six people there.

I do not know why I went. I had not gone to any satsang for years. Ed was *done* with spirituality. But I went, and I heard him speak, and I knew I had met my teacher. Afterwards I went up to him and I said, “Robert, where have you been my entire life?”

And he gave me that nonsense statement. “I’ve been around.”

You know, I do not think there were ever more than 35 people that went to his satsang. Maybe on a day that we had a festival there would be 40 or 45, and on Thursday nights there would be, even at the busiest, 25 people. And that was near the end, before he left for Sedona.

People came and people went. But like that one chant [*I Will Be Thine Always*], only three of us stayed with him the entire time he was in Los Angeles: Mary Skene, Lee Scantlin and I.

Everybody else came, and left.

What's the matter, Lakshmi? [Referring to his cat] Sometimes her mouth bothers her. [to cat] Hmm, sweetie?

And I would see him every Thursday for lunch. Other people would see him other days for lunch. I would drive him to satsang at least once and sometimes twice a week. So I got to see him quite a bit, compared with other people.

You know, all that we all wanted to do was to be with Robert. If we could have been with him 24 hours a day, we would have been.

When lunch ended I felt so bereft, to have him return home. To open the door of my car, and have him nearly fall over when he gets out because his balance is so poor. To greet him at the door for lunch. Have him open the door, and there is a big smile on his face, and his dog Dimitri would be there at his feet.

I would see Robert. I would feel so happy.

Then we would drive to a little park nearby—Warner Park—and we would walk around the park once. Dimitri was not with us, so this was lunchtime. And we would just bullshit. Talk about whatever we felt like talking about.

Sometimes a deep question, but more often, “How are you? What are you doing? What's new?” For both of us. We would sit at this concrete bench in the park, and just hang out.

I was in bliss. I was happy to be with my teacher, my Robert.

Then we would go to lunch at Follow Your Heart Vegetarian Restaurant, or sometimes we would go with an Indian family that lived in our area, Canoga Park. There were five or six of them, and they were all Robert's devotees. It was a family setting. It was very nice; for a long period of time we went there.

And then, again I would get to pick him up to take him to satsang. I lived in Santa Monica. He lived in Woodland Hills. Satsang could be anywhere in the San Fernando Valley. So it was a lot of driving, but it was my pleasure to be driving the guru, my Robert, to satsang.

To lead satsang sitting next to him on his right hand side. Putting a microphone cable on him. Getting the cassette ready to play, to record his talk. And then he would talk. After a bit of silence, he would open his eyes and look around the room. Everybody was looking at him. On Sundays, he would start with a joke.

And Robert had rotten teeth—unbelievably. The repair estimate before he left would be \$40,000, and that was in 1995. He had broken teeth and rotten teeth. But he would start satsang on Sundays by making a big laugh. He would grab his lips like this [Edji demonstrates], and pull them apart to get people to smile, and all of his ugly teeth would be showing.

He did not care.

But we all wanted to be around him, his close students. That is all we wanted. And afterwards, we were good for shit. We could not function. I learned not to go back to work. I would have been useless at work. I just went home and went to bed.

We all felt that way. None of us wanted to work. We just wanted to be like Robert, and do nothing. [laughs] We told him this, and he said, “Be careful of what you wish for.”

You know, I did not work much for five years after that.

I was supposed to take my test to be a psychologist, a licensed psychologist in the state of California. Normally, people said it takes 5 or 6 months to study for it. I sent away for the lesson material and it was a box about three feet long. It must have been 10,000 pages of tests and information.

I just looked at that box and thought of taking off six months from doing psychotherapy, and even being with Robert. He said, “Don’t do it. Stay by me. Stay with me. Don’t take the test.”

Those of us around him got lazier and lazier. My mail piled up. I will bet you at some times it got to be a stack of mail three feet high. And I would tell him about how overwhelmed I felt about all the mail. He says, “If it’s really important they’ll come and get you. Just throw it away. Just throw the mail away. It’s not important.”

He would always say, “Just stay by me. Stay close to me.”

And we did. Three of us did.

But it was not easy. We could not function. We had to pay to help support the Guru, and if you are not working, the money does not come in too much. [Laughs] Especially when he tells us, “Forget about getting licensed. Forget about opening all that mail.”

And on top of that—I do not know whether it was because of his teeth, or because he had Parkinson’s, it was hard for him to bathe—but he always had a smell, an odour. A bad odour. But ugly teeth, odour or not, we just wanted to be around him.

I cannot say at that time I loved him. I just wanted to be around him all the time. He was hard to love, because he was so empty. There was nobody really there. It was like loving an empty closet. But that empty closet was so peaceful.

And afterwards, the energies would just rip through my body. I would go into a kind of blank state, a state where I would disappear, consciousness would disappear. It felt like sleep, but it was not sleep.

We all wanted to be in his presence, be close to him.

But again, it was not easy. He cooked us. He made it hard to be around him. He created situations around him that toasted everybody. He gave everybody the same exclusive job, and you would show up one day and find out that there were five other people doing your exact job, and you were one of many, when before you thought you had an exclusive relationship with him.

Sometimes we would go to a movie. Sometimes, he would circulate rumours behind your back. Sometimes, he would just outright lie to you. Sometimes he told the same lies to several people. Sometimes he told different lies to different people. There was always chaos at satsang.

And the worse it got, the more he seemed to like it. He liked the drama, to see our egos come out and get burnt to a crisp, and want to leave him. Desperately we wanted to leave him at times, but we could not. We were hooked.

Now he has been dead sixteen years; this month.

I love him more now than I ever loved him before. More than when I was with him. And now he is in me. I feel his presence. I used to feel it above me and behind me, back in the mid 2000's when I first started the website. [*It is Not Real dot com*, Edji's first teaching website, now archived on *We Are Sentience dot com*.]

But now he is within me. My Robert is within me. I love him so now, but then I did not love him. I just wanted to be with him. In his presence. To feel his presence.

Can we play *I Will Be Thine Always* again?

[Chanting—*I Will Be Thine Always*]

You know, Robert was the real deal.

But I was also around Muktananda for two or three years. Six months when he was in LA, and then his successors. He died soon after he left Los Angeles, and

he appointed the successors Nityananda and Chidvilasananda. I was head of security for Los Angeles when they came into town.

And the things I saw! What people would do to be around the guru.

With Muktananda, some of them even swallowed his urine. They would retrieve it from the toilet, to incorporate him. He had two Rottweilers to keep people away because everybody wanted to touch the guru. They wanted a piece of him. They wanted to be with him.

Thousands of people would come—sometimes 2000 people a night—four abreast in darshan line. And he would hit them with a peacock feather. Some would be frozen in samadhi, in ecstasy. Others would challenge him. But they had security all over to get rid of anybody that wanted to challenge him.

The same with Chidvilasananda: everybody wanted to be around her. They wanted to be near the guru, hear the guru's voice, even the rebuke. Just the tiniest morsel of being noticed by the teacher, by their teacher. Everyone was dying for the guru's love, recognition.

Not me—I did not care about them [Muktananda, Nityananda, Chidvilasananda]—this was before Robert. But I saw it. I saw the devotion. It did not mean much to me, back then. I just liked the chanting. And back then my ego liked being up front with the swamis, and at Muktananda's feet, or Chidvilasananda's feet, or Nityananda's feet; protecting the guru with my security staff. We felt important.

And the chanting was so sweet. There was always chanting in the ashram—the music in the background, but especially at darshan and at the beginning of the program. To have 1000 people chanting, all one voice, call and response, men and women. One side would be the men, the other side would be the women, and they would call and respond to each other. Such bliss, such beauty, such profound intensity of love.

And I guess with Muktananda, it was all about love. Feeling love for the teacher, feeling love for God, feeling love for each other.

But Robert was more empty than that. It was not love. It was not even his sense of presence.

Well, maybe it was, but there *was* no sense of presence. There was just emptiness. And so much peace and comfort in that emptiness.

Robert's words didn't mean much, especially the Sunday talks. He would even come to the end of the talk and say, "I just made that up, because you like to listen to concepts."

It was just being in his presence. *Feeling* that emptiness. It took away all the concepts. It took away all the pain. It took away all the emotions. It took away all the loneliness. All of those were eaten up in the emptiness.

But in the most important way, while we were focusing on Robert's emptiness, or on Robert, or on Muktananda, all the real stuff was happening within ourselves. Feeling Robert's emptiness made it so much easier to get into my own. Feeling the love around Muktananda made it so much easier for me to feel my own.

What we feel towards the teacher, our guru, or our lover, or father or mother, is really our own feelings. They kind of get magnified when we are around a teacher, because everybody else is feeling them too. The guru brings them out.

It is when you go to a teacher with a certain mindset. Given that mindset, it makes you receptive to different things you see in your teacher, or in your lover, or in your mother, or your father. Depending on your receptivity and your openness, you feel things in him or her because they are in you; and you may not be able to feel them otherwise.

I never felt the love a lot of people felt for Robert. I felt the emptiness. I never felt anything towards Muktananda. But I loved the satsang. I loved the sangha. I loved the community. The sweetness of the community.

And look at us: we have our community.

I would like to change gears now, and have a reading from Nisargadatta. I am trying to cover this whole book [*Prior to Consciousness*]. We have gone through about 31 pages so far, and there is another 120 pages to go. We will do that tonight.

I think this one is extraordinary. Maharaj says [in *Prior to Consciousness*, 19th July 1980, page 32]:

Maharaj: *I've been advised by doctors not to talk, therefore I am not talking.*

This is in the middle of a talk.

Questioner: *Is there a desire not to die and lose your body?*

Maharaj: *The sage is not concerned with that.*

Here he is so aloof. He talks about himself, “the sage”.

Questioner: *Is there a desire of the body, not of the Self?*

Maharaj: *You may say something like that; this is the administrative action of that beingness.*

It is a very complicated riddle. You have to discard whatever you know, whatever you have read, and have a firm conviction about That about which nobody knows anything.

He is talking about the Absoute, your true nature as a subject.

You can't get any information about That, -

And “That” is capitalised.

... and about That you must have firm conviction. How difficult it is.

And that is because he is always saying you are not the body. You are not the 'I Am'. You are beyond that. He says you have to have a conviction that you are beyond that, and unknowable. You cannot have knowledge of what you are as subject.

Most people reach that state which is, -

And he is talking about 'I Am-ness,' or beingness. [Repeating a bit]

Most people reach that state which is, but nobody reaches that state which is not. It is very rarely that one can reach that state. It transcends all knowledge.

Most essential is that knowledge "I Am."

Now, here he is changing gears. [Repeating a bit]

It is very rarely that one can reach that state. It transcends all knowledge.

But then he changes back:

Most essential is that knowledge "I Am." Claim it, appropriate it as your own. If that is not there, nothing is.

If that 'I Am' is not there, nothing is. Without the 'I Am' consciousness, there is no world. There is no knowledge. There is no existence. Without your 'I Am,' nothing is. [Repeating a bit]

If that is not there, nothing is. Knowledge of all the stages will be obtained only with the aid of this knowledge "I Am."

Knowledge of all the stages of existence. From objects in existence to the 'I Am', to consciousness itself, to that which lies beyond consciousness, is only obtained through the aid of this knowledge: 'I Am.'

From the Absolute no-knowing state, spontaneously, this consciousness "I Am" has appeared—there is no reason, no cause. Spontaneously it has come, with the waking state, deep sleep, the five elemental play, three Gunas, and Prakriti and Purusha.

Matter and spirit.

Then it embraces the body as its self and therefore identifies as a male or a female. This "I Amness" has its own love to be: it wants to remain, to perpetuate itself, but it is not eternal.

Let me repeat that.

From the Absolute no-knowing state -

And that is the one you cannot know about in any way, shape or form, because it is the subject. It cannot be an object of knowledge.

From the Absolute no-knowing state, spontaneously, this consciousness "I Am" has appeared—there is no reason, no cause. Spontaneously it has come, with the waking state, deep sleep, the five elemental play, three Gunas, and Prakriti and Purusha. Then it embraces the body -

It identifies with the body, with your body.

...as its self -

It identifies with the body as itself. 'I Am' takes on the identity of the body.

...and therefore identifies as a male or a female. This "I Amness" has its own love to be: it wants to remain, to perpetuate itself, but it is not eternal.

This passing show may be likened to the following situation: suppose I was well all along, then suddenly I was sick and the doctor gave me medicine. After three days my fever was gone. So this stage of fever for three days is the "I Am"

consciousness. Exactly like that—a passing show, a time-bound state. This principle loves to be, and one must not belittle it—it is a very Godly principle. This "I Amness" contains the entire cosmos.

Your 'I Amness', your consciousness which identifies with the body, actually contains the entirety of the cosmos.

It is said that all this is unreal. When is it certified as unreal? Only when one understands this temporary phase. And in the process of understanding one is in the Absolute and from there recognizes this as a temporary, unreal state.

This is really important. It is said that all of this—the cosmos—is unreal. The body is unreal. *[Repeating a bit]*

When is it certified as unreal?

When do you recognise it as unreal?

Only when one understands this temporary phase. And in the process of understanding one is in the Absolute and from there recognizes this as a temporary, unreal state.

So who is it that recognises that the 'I Am,' and everything, is just a passing state? It is the Absolute. It is you as subject, you the transcendental one, that recognises all of this, all of this around you, the coming and going of consciousness, is a temporary state.

It is the Absolute that recognises this.

And once you recognise it, you recognise that you are in the Absolute state. You are the unchanging one. You are the one that recognises the coming and going, because you are permanent, and eternal, and untouched by consciousness.

This is the crux of his teachings.

In my present state I am not able to talk much. The difficulty is that you have been accepting this as real and I have to disprove this and a lot of talking is to be done by me, which I am not in a position to do now. So, you go now, do bhajans.

That is, chant.

One more time:

It is said that all this is unreal.

Robert used to say it all the time. “It is all illusion. It is all appearance. It is all a mirage, everything you see, hear, taste and touch. The body is unreal. The furniture is unreal. The walls are unreal. All the things that you see around you are unreal. The thoughts are unreal. Nothing has substance.”

But Nisargadatta is saying something different.

When is it made unknown? When is it certified that all of this is unreal? Where did that come from? Where did this concept that everything is unreal come from? Where do you know it? When do you really know it? [Repeating a bit]

Only when one understands this temporary phase.

When one understands that everything just passes. It comes, and goes. It comes, and goes.

And in the process of understanding one is in the Absolute -

This is an understanding. This is the knowledge of the Absolute about what it is seeing and perceiving about the nature of reality.

... and from there recognizes this as a temporary, unreal state.

Who is it that recognises the temporary, uneternal state? Well, it can only be that which is permanent, eternal. Only that which is at rest and is not moving itself can recognise the movement of consciousness, and sees it is just a passing thing.

And see that it is separate from me.

The coming and going of consciousness is seen by me, who is removed from the coming and going of consciousness. It is an object to me. *I* witness it. *I* see its coming and going. *I* see it is impermanent.

And who is this 'I' that sees the impermanence? This is the Absolute I. The Absolute, the one who does not change, and therefore recognises change.

This is the one who sees consciousness saying 'I am'.

This is the 'I' at the centre of 'I Am.' Going deeply, deeply beyond consciousness. Into the root, into the Absolute, which cannot be known itself and *from* which you know, and *from* which you act.

That is page 32.

Now, on page 33:

.... For you I am expounding very secret knowledge about your own beingness, how it came about—that is what I am talking about.

This play is just happening; you are not playing a part. When you are ignorant, you think you are playing a part in this manifest world. There is no one working deliberately— it is happening spontaneously. You cannot claim anything in this process. When you are thoroughly knowledgeable you will come to the conclusion that this beingness is also an illusion.

[Repeating a bit]

There is no one working deliberately—it is happening spontaneously. You cannot claim anything in this process.

Now, the question:

Questioner: *Who recognizes that it is illusion or ignorance?*

And this is the crucial question.

Maharaj: *Only that one recognizes or witnesses all that as ignorance.*

Only that one, the Absolute. The unchanging. The pure sentience element of “We Are Sentience.” The cognizer. Awareness.

Only that one recognises or witnesses all that is in ignorance.

That one cannot understand That one, he can witness and understand only the ignorance. The one who recognizes all this as ignorance, that one is knowledgeable.

[Repeating a bit]

The one who recognizes all this as ignorance, that one is knowledgeable.

That is the basic ‘I’, the basic Absolute me - *is knowledgeable*. And the knowledge is the ‘I Am,’ which flowers out of the Absolute.

Why are you calling me jnani and listening to my talks? Because I have recognized and understood that child ignorance, the "I Amness," and have transcended that.

Finally you have to understand that the principle which you are using to talk, to move about, and operate in this world, is not you.

In other words, the ‘I Amness’, the consciousness, the body, is not you. It is the *knower* of you.

Okay.

Now for a musical interlude. How about playing both of the *Hare Krishna*’s—the Yogananda one, and the Muktananda one.

[Chanting—*Hare Krishna* (Yogananda version)]

I love you all. I will say that again at the end of the chant. I will stick around. Stick around with me.

[Chanting—*Hare Krishna* (Muktananda version)]

The power of chanting. Some of you even chant! You know it really helps to start out by chanting, and after a while you cannot chant any more and the ecstasy and the emptiness whirl through you.

But it helps really to chant. [Chuckling] Especially if the words are so easy, like “Hare Krishna” and “Hare Ram”. They are really easy. Just do that for the first five or six minutes.

Get carried away, get carried away, and when you get carried away chanting, then the chanting takes over you and does the rest. If you just sit and listen passively, it feels beautiful but it does not have the power as if you actually chanted yourself, and put some of your own heart into it.

The time has come to end this satsang. I love you all, and I know you all love me.

One big happy family. If we lived together, of course we would be squabbling constantly, but... it is great. [Laughs]

I think there was about one of us for every 500 square miles on the North American continent—or 5000 square miles.

Lot of space between us.

Take care. I love you all.

Bye-bye.

<http://www.wearesentience.com>