

What others are saying about *Gifts With No Giver...*

I first picked up this gem of a book about a decade ago, around the time I was discovering Nirmala and his teachings in the non-dual tradition. Here Nirmala shares his beautiful experiences of Awakening through his own unique heartfelt words. Enlightened spiritual poetry not unlike other mystical offerings like Rumi, the Songs of Kabir or Lao Tzu's sayings. I continue to find fresh inspiration whenever I open these pages, and with an open heart dare to let myself be touched.–Akash, BC

At a meditation retreat I was leading at Harbin Hot Springs, a participant handed me your free book of spiritual poetry, *Gifts with No Giver*. From the moment I opened it, my heart soared into the realms of Silence that your words invited. Tears of truth touched my soul. I have so wanted to savor each poem that I have been reading only one every few days. I love squeezing the juice out of each poem! Thank you for the depths that you have traveled inside yourself that allows your words to thrust me inward.–Peter Rengel, Retreat Leader and author of *Living Life in Love and Seeds of Light*

If you are looking for a book of spiritual poetry to help light your spiritual path, this book will be a good choice. The subtitle of the book, *A Love Affair with Truth*, describes well the theme of this collection of spiritual poems. Nirmala's depth of insight is well represented. -Gloria Achterberg

GIFTS WITH NO GIVER

a love affair with truth

Poems by Nirmala

Nirmala offers these poems in gratitude for the love and grace that flow through his teacher, Neelam, and in gratitude for the blessings of truth brought to this world by Ramana Maharshi and H.W.L. Poonja. In addition he would like to thank Donald Turcotte for his generous assistance in the design and production of this collection, and also Pamela Wilson for her help with editing.

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To Neelam: the blue sapphire flame in my heart

(Note: There is a free bonus at the end of this book of Part two of *Living from the Heart* by Nirmala)

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GIFTS WITH NO GIVER

your hand is always in mine
your whispered endearments are my constant companion
you have never turned your face from me
no matter how many times I have turned from you

now I vow undying love
I meet you in the secret places I used to hide from you in
I hold you with tenderness I used to reserve for my pain
I would give you my life and my breath in an instant

for you are my true love
the one with no form
the one who has never been anywhere, but right here
in the singing of my heart

why fear this moment
when no thoughts come
at last I lie naked
in the arms of experience

why fear this moment
when no words come
at last I find rest
in the lap of silence

why fear this moment when love finds itself alone
at last I am embraced
by infinity itself

why fear this moment
when judgment falls away
at last my defenses
fail to keep intimacy at bay
why fear this moment
when hope is lost
at last my foolish dreams
are surrendered to perfection

I may think I feel love but it is love that feels me
constantly testing the woven fibers that enclose and protect my heart
with a searing flame
that allows no illusion of separation

and as the insubstantial fabric of my inner fortress
is peeled away by the persistent fire
I desperately try to save some charred remains
by escaping into one more dream of passion
I may think I can find love
but it is love that finds me

meanwhile, love becomes patient and lies in wait
its undying embers gently glowing
and even if I now turn and grasp after the source of warmth
I end up cold and empty-handed
I may think I can possess love
but it is love that possesses me

and finally, I am consumed
for love has flared into an engulfing blaze
that takes everything
and gives nothing in return
I may think love destroys me
but it is love that sets me free

the past is long gone
from here
there is no way back
how could there be

the present is over too quickly for feeble desires to have any effect
except to hide peace

the future races ahead forever out of reach
of dreamy wishes
and useless plans

and yet when I rest in the endless now
every need is satisfied
in ways never imagined

I have fallen in love with truth
I only want to be with her
I cannot stand to be apart
I would gladly go to the ends of the earth
or I would never again move from this spot
just to be sure to inhale her fragrant perfume
with my dying breath

I have fallen in love with truth
her every wish my command
I simply must obey
for she has captured my soul
and taken complete control
of even my innermost thoughts
freeing me to find repose in her unadorned splendor

I have fallen in love with truth
with exquisite tenderness she shows me
the perfection in my every flaw
no need for pretense
for she knows everything about me
and yet takes me in her arms
with complete abandon
until only she remains

sunlight burns
shadow cools
there is no difference

earth is still
grass is moving
there is no difference

wind rustles
sky is silent
there is no difference

spider drifts by on a silken web
and I remain
there is no difference

where is absence of desire
once I dreamed there would only be bliss
now I am in awe of the ordinary
now I am content with longing or no longing
desires do not disturb the source of all desire
life and death carry on as they always have
and always will

only the dreamer is gone
behind the flow of imagination
beyond any effort to be still
dancing in the ebb and flow of attention
more present than the breath
I find the origins of my illusions

only the dreamer is gone
the dream never ends

river of voices
eternal mantra of foam
meaningless words swallowed in a humming roar
thoughts arise and are splashed away

river of music
sacred song of motion
nowhere to go but downstream
actions arise and are swept away

river of sounds
laughing and crying
impossible to bring the depths to the surface
emotions arise and are washed away

river of silence
flowing through everything
peace beyond even the absence of sound
nothing ever arises

I don't know what to say
I never know what to say
yet there is great power in not knowing
knowing I can never know
the mystery constantly deepens
overwhelming my sense of what is
the mystery speaks without words
taking the breath away
leaving no air for words
in silence there is room for pain and bliss
in unlimited measure

love is a dream that does not stop
when you awaken
but constantly surprises
no strong emotions stirring up dust
and clouding your vision

love is more than it seems
and has a purpose
you cannot see
and yet cannot hide from

love is an inescapable reality
that knocks you senseless
takes your breath away
and leaves no heart beating but its own

nobody is my lover
I searched for her for lifetimes
and finally noticed she was always at my side
nothing is my heart's true desire
but something used to always get in the way
now emptiness fills me to overflowing
as I fall into my lover's embrace

I can love you or ...
I can love love itself

and thus love you truly
letting illusion rest at last
has freedom spoiled me for any other lover
or is there room for the one in the infinite

questions fall away in the embrace of my true love
join me in her arms
and rest at last
I am carried
like a mother holding her infant child
tender, yet firm
I am provided for
with caring attention that anticipates every need
and yet
I am swallowed whole by this love

no longer my hand that moves
no longer my voice that muses
no longer my eyes that fill with tears
at the simple beauty of a hazy afternoon

who could contain this rapture
who keeps this heart beating
who could keep this heart from breaking
at the loss of everything it foolishly held dear

questions have lost their fascination
longing has surrendered to fullness
gratitude is enough
even with the loss of everything foolishly held dear

endless traces of memory
fill in empty moments
stealing my peace
and robbing my happiness
they cannot take the real treasure
beyond peace and happiness

behind every memory
is simple awareness
of this ordinary moment
a body breathing a mind making comparisons
and yet something more
is always present

this simple moment
a body still breathing
mind still chasing dreams
what is the something more
that fills the ordinary with magic?
the full recognition
of what was always longed for
in the heart

through emptiness
peace is born
no painful labor required
an easy birth
an easy life an easy death
the peace flows from the depths
the heart can only be broken
when the object of love is gone
but true love has no object

through emptiness
awareness is born
it grows untended
filling the emptiness with eyes
and ears and noses
and more hearts
to be broken and mended
broken and mended
until they can no longer be broken
only mended

through awareness
birth is ended
what never ends needs no beginning
love is too large
for a heart to hold
yet the opened heart
rests in this largeness
until fear is also ended
knowing the heart has always been unbroken

no poem
no song
no ritual
captures the simple beingness of a stone
let alone a mountain of stone

but let the stone write the poem
let the mountain sing in your heart
let the rituals fall like gentle rain to nourish the gods inside every stone and every mountain
let your soul rise above the mountain
above the rain
above the clouds
the journey home requires no effort
only willingness to release your claw like grip on the familiar ground

then the stone speaks unspeakable truth
then the mountain fills your heart with a silent song of peace
and rituals sprout wings of surrender in your soul
and you arrive here

like a green desert
life has burst forth
in this empty container
spilling over
and moistening the parched soil

no need to store the bounty
the supply is endless
the source is at hand
the fruits of no labor
within easy reach

feast on this feed the deepest longing
drink until thirst is a distant memory
desire itself is consumed
when the heart finds nourishment

your smile
morning sun on new fallen snow
melting the icy chill
unveiling a blue sapphire flame in my heart
burning memory into ash
revealing bliss

your eyes
dark liquid pools of grace
causing a whirlpool of emotion
carrying me to the depths
drowning me in joy

your touch
gentlest breeze
passing through skin and flesh and bone
healing so complete
leaving no scars
where once were deep wounds

your form
graceful flight in empty sky
giving me birth
naming me
ruling me forever
yet your only command: setting me free

your voice
birdsong and distant thunder
inspiring quiet so vast
thinking no longer finds refuge

your love
a rain swollen river overflowing its banks
washing away all cherished possessions
leaving an empty cup
full of peace

I never knew tears could feel so good
until I opened my heart and found they come from the same source
as boundless laughter

instead of blurring my vision
they bring beauty into focus

instead of burning my cheeks
they wash away dusty dryness I used to hide behind

let sorrow have me now
for surrender has freed me to savor the bittersweet nectar
that flows in measureless abundance
from within

I bathe in holy water
wash myself clean in the sacred river
nothing has changed
yet senses are now clear
and I hear what she is saying to my heart:

give me your foolish thoughts...
you don't need them anymore
give me your every desire...
they will never fulfill you
give me your deepest fears...
what use have they ever been to you
give me your very soul...
you have always been too large
for its tight confines

so once again I plunge into Ganga's embrace

once for my thoughts
once more for my desires
and a third time for my fears

she has always had my soul

and once again, nothing has changed...
nothing always changes

no deep rooted fears
fear exists on the surface
fear is the surface dive deeper and fear is swallowed
in the depth of knowing

nothing to fear in this moment
even when a gun is held to your head
the thing most feared has not yet happened
once an event has occurred
fear is too late

fear has no home here
where all is as it is
Breathe the tranquil air
and discover the fragrant serenity

thoughts dance their enticing moves
before my entranced inner sight
but the spell is broken
when I wonder
who is entranced

memories beckon seductively
with all the luster they can manage
yet their shine is swallowed
in the light
behind my eyes

there is one dancer
I cannot resist
her only movement is utter stillness
I find no memory
in her transparent gaze

romance is a simple mistake
finding true love
in the arms of one other
is like capturing a waterfall
in a tiny cup
thirst is slightly quenched
why not just step into the source

romance is a beautiful distraction
taking you beyond your dry concerns
yet what good is an open heart
with room for only one when that one is gone
the heart is empty and dry
and tears fall on empty ground

romance is a single drop
in a torrent of love
why settle for one sip at a time
the sweetest tasting water is deeper than the surface
dive into the current
and as you are swept away
drink to your heart's content

nothing seen is wasted
the sight of every eye
increases the range of vision
of that which sees

every sight is a gem
of pure perfection
in the inner eyes
of that which sees

each viewpoint
lives on forever
nothing can die
within that which sees

look deeply into any eye
beyond your reflection
come face to face
with that which sees

abandon appearance
let go of pretense
you are naked and exposed
before that which sees

do not turn away your gaze
no need to hide
only love shines in the eyes of that which sees

all may have a mind of their own
but thoughts are gifts of grace
touching mind for an instant
like melting snowflakes
every place can be home but rest is a divine blessing
when effort falls away
like the setting sun

the heart may burn with emptiness
but love comes in waves
smoothing away doubts
like a tide erasing footprints in the sand

in the dream I always play the fool
in the dream
my defenses always fail
in the dream
my desires are never fully satisfied
in the dream
my heart is broken over and over

wide awake
I always play the fool
wide awake
my defenses always fail
wide awake
my desires are never fully satisfied
wide awake
my heart sings its endless joy

what should we do
what is the purpose of life
here is the endless task
to do nothing well
here is your purpose
to be free of any purpose

why do we suffer so
how can we end the pain
here is the source of suffering
in the desire to end suffering
there is no end to pain
nor an end to joy within the soul of freedom

my longing was never deep enough
to touch this empty well
my effort was never great enough
to move this unmovable mountain
my understanding was never broad enough
to contain this silent truth
my dreaming was never real enough
to shape this formless presence
nothing is always enough
when nothing is needed

the mystery
of this simple moment
cannot be spoken
yet all of history
occurred to arrive here

the mystery
of the endless terrain of self
cannot be mapped out
countless new frontiers
are born with every breath

the mystery
of awakening
cannot be achieved all that is needed
is to notice inner eyes that never close

the mystery
of sweet undying love
cannot be understood
the heart already knows
what the mind can only long for

the mysteries
always remain
untouched by worried thought
ready to welcome us home
when we abandon our dreams

take my hand
feel the vital grip
that love lends to this flesh
listen to my voice
hear the catch in my throat
of awe that can't be expressed
gaze into my eyes
see tears welling up
as I recognize my long lost self in your smile
rest in my arms
find refuge in my embrace
until you know you are forever safe
join me now
here where we have never parted

no word is real enough
to conjure up a crumb of bread
still we try to find nourishment
in endless musing

no thought is thick enough to cushion a fall
yet we pursue idle distractions
while tripping on obstacles in our path

there is a silent voice behind the words
there is a quiet source of every thought
listen without your ears
ponder without your mind
rest your senses and your sense
for just one moment of this stillness
will sustain and uphold you forever

it is here
in the breath
it is here
in the stillness between breaths

it is here
in the active mind
it is here
in the resting mind
it is here
in the dream's panorama
it is here
in each moment of awakening

it is here
when all is well
it is here
when fear has nothing left to fear

even then
there is pure noticing even then
there is no need for doing

no frantic searching can find the obvious
no seeking needed
to find that which seeks

it is here
where it can never be lost
or found

where does willingness come from
willing to do anything
although nothing can be done
willing to surrender everything
although nothing is mine willing to be exposed although there is nothing to hide

where does lovingness come from
loving the flaws in us
although we are perfect
loving the simplicity although feelings are so complex
loving you although no one is there

where does gratefulness come from
grateful for the laughter
although the joke is on me
grateful for the beauty
although eyes cannot truly see
grateful for the bounty
although hands are forever empty

truth is a living being
that must be nourished and fed
and loved
then it grows and blossoms
filling the air with pure aroma
making us gasp with delight

truth is a friend
that asks for loyalty and acceptance
then it enters our hearts
dissolving the boundaries freeing us from loneliness

truth is a demanding lover
that requires constant affection
and endless gifts
then it rewards us
with a glimpse of indescribable beauty
making us faint with satisfaction

and finally truth is an empty hand
that asks for and requires nothing

the obvious signs
a playful smile
absence of pretense
disregard for convention
respect for truth

listen when they speak
look where they point
follow where they lead
abandon hope and faith and dreams
accept nothing less than all they have to give
your share in the infinite is infinite

come claim your birthright
return to the place never left
return and let the seeker rest
subside in the unending peace

let the seeker rest
let that which you seek find you
let the seeker rest
the task is finished
let the seeker rest
let the seeker rest

behind closed eyes
the world falls away
a whirl of empty sensation
with no boundary
drowning thought in a silent symphony
burning the body
in painless effigy
when eyes open again
the world is cleansed
only perfection remains
the room is resplendent
with the absence of illusion

grateful
for grace
that fills mind with visions
of the invisible

grateful
for time
that expands to embrace
stillness

grateful
for breath
that seems to require
no breather

grateful
for gratitude
that breaks the soul wide open
freeing love

in a timeless instant
before a painful idea appears in my mind
an ever present softness, a gentle hand reaches into my thoughts
and soothes them until they reflect only empty sky

in a timeless moment
before a desire burns in my heart
an inexhaustible peace, a whispered silence
quells the storm
of fruitless wishing
leaving me breathlessly still

in a timeless lifetime
before my story is wrenched from silence
a wordless honesty, an unflinching gaze
shows me my face
without shadows of doubt dimming the fire within
in a timeless eternity
before my soul is torn from infinity
a passionate tenderness, an enfolding embrace
leaves me alone with the source of sweetness even closer than a kiss

welcome home
welcome to the home never left
you have always lived here
will always live here
this is home, forever...
so stop now
no effort is required
even during all journeys
you have always been here
this is home, forever...
so relax now
the fire is in the hearth
this inner fire is keeping you warm
the storms outside cannot touch you
this is home, forever...
so rest now
everyone loved is right here
we have always lived here will always live here
this is home, forever...

I must follow this thought
all the way
let the mind have its way with me
but only with me
not with the quiet presence
the voice behind all thoughts

I must feel this emotion
with my whole being
and as it sweeps me off my feet
enjoy the sensation of falling
falling endlessly into the arms
of no lover

I must, I must
for this dream demands no less
than total suspension of disbelief
total surrender for the dream and the dreamer
are one and the same

I have never been more than a dream
and the dreamer
is awake

endless poems wait to be written while all has been said before
this truth cannot be spoken and so I try again
just to get a little closer
to the unspeakable reality

forever gently teasing just out of reach
forever invisible at the edge of perception
forever tranquil in the maelstrom of feelings
forever present in this moment's eternity

it doesn't matter
what I do
mind judges
then judges itself for judging
that's just what minds do
when I let it have its way
it surprises me by stopping
and in the vacant interlude
the mind finds no grip
and falls effortlessly into the deep pool of silence
it never left

rain falls
within the endless awareness
the sun still shines
behind the clouds

loss rips
at the heart of love
empty peace still rests
at the source of tears

floods wash
away the precious hillsides
life rises to the surface
for another breath of joy

thoughts race
across the mind's attention
quiet still sings
from the throat of nowhere

pure freedom remains
when all else is
swallowed in the river of time

mind always wins
every thought an artful trap
leading further into dreams
resistance speeds the entanglement
surrender, the only option

then what surprising silence
entanglement becomes a tender caress
dreaming dissolves in wonder

mind continues the endless game
jumping in to claim peace as its own
creating a new identity to play with
as if it could find something solid in empty space laughter, the only response

then identities come and go
mind plays on the surface
silence enjoys it all

all I have ever wanted is wanting
all I have ever had is having
all I am is all there is
and wanting and having are always here
in equal measure

all I have ever loved is love
all I have ever loved is loving
all I am is love
and loving is always here
in infinite measure

quite ordinary desires
come and go come and go
never needing to be fulfilled
their satisfaction made irrelevant
by the shining beauty of a rain soaked forest
the rain washing away thoughts
of something lacking

what could be lacking
in this explosion of life
that grows in each nook and cranny
of the infinite heart
the moisture of love
seeping down to nourish the roots
of every being
or dancing in streams and rivers
all the way home

die a little
with every disappointment
or find what never dies
and has no preferences

try a little
and keep illusion going
or see the futility of effort
and stop pushing on nothing

be happy a little
now and then when circumstance allows
or rest in the source of happiness
now, then and always

believe a little
that you are someone
or notice there is no separate one
nor any limit to being

love a little
with half a heart
or let love have it all
filling the heart to overflowing

the dance of emptiness
goes on and on
colors, shapes and forms
arrayed in courtly splendor
on the dance floor of infinity

the patterns of the dance
will hypnotize if watched too closely
while the entire view
ends all trances
and frees the dreaming mind

now join the dance
its irresistible ebb and flow
swallows your pride
in the pure joy
of moving stillness

this voice is inadequate
to express the abundant wonder
of this endless moment

this body is insufficient
to embrace the sweet infinity
of this lover's bodiless form

these eyes are unable
to capture the invisible beauty
of a cloudless sky

and yet I sing with joy,
caress the air with tenderness,
allow beauty to fill my eyes with tears,
and know that the love in my heart
is always enough

truth is too simple for words
before thought gets tangled up in nouns and verbs
there is a wordless sound a deep breathless sigh
of overwhelming relief
to find the end of fiction
in this ordinary
yet extraordinary moment
when words are recognized
as words
and truth is recognized
as everything else

a quiet room
empty of profound thoughts
in this moment
no need to uncover deep truths

the chairs do not mind the silence
the rug is not burdened by the lack of weighty ideas
only the thought, "there must be something more"
cries out in pretended anguish

the chairs pay no attention
the rug only lies more quietly
until the pretended suffering
can't help but notice
there is always more
that does not need to be revealed

laughter stops thought
and fills the space behind the eyes with light
such simple delight
to find nothing is knowable

I can only give everything
to this nothing
and am overjoyed
to let it tear down the barricade in my chest
and steal my heart

the room is empty
except for these saddened eyes
that find refuge in emptiness

friends come and go
lovers come and go
but love itself never wavers

emptiness is my refuge
emptiness is my resting place
everywhere I turn
the end of boundaries awaits

take sadness now
take happiness also
leave only clear vision

the room is still empty
except for these opened eyes
that find refuge in fullness

early in the morning
asleep in a dream
only to awaken in another dream
why disturb the quiet mist
with imaginary forms
the heart is never fulfilled
with dream lovers

for there is never enough
of what does not satisfy

so let the mist have it all
I have moistened my cheeks long enough in this fog of dreaming
I will not move again until my true love appears

when at last the sun burns away the haze
no one is there
what relief. . . to find her waiting

mind finds a path
to struggle along
never reaching the goal
heart knows it already rests
in the path of something wonderful
it cannot escape

mind seeks to hold onto
a still point of final understanding
heart knows it is being held
by an unmoving whirlwind
that it will never comprehend

mind tries to feel safe enough
to allow love
out into the open
heart knows love is never cautious
and cannot be kept secret
once all hope of refuge is abandoned

simply resting
from a full day of resting
feeling too rested
to even consider anything more

simply quiet
staying in the silent pauses
no thought
not even the idea: no thought

too busy
doing nothing
to stop long enough
to do something less

excitement stirs the blood
yet only nothingness is ever palpable
imagined pleasures always fall short
compared to the simple reality
this bird in the hand
is worth a million in the bush
sensations have their say
promising satisfaction, as if they could stay
long enough to fulfill endless desire
yet always ending in a reverberating empty stillness
this deafening calm
is cherished by the core of being as the true source of infinity

light through a prism...
a rainbow
love through my heart...
the spectrum of feelings revealed
red anger to blue sadness
yellow fear to black despair
allow them back into my heart
and the prism works in reverse
turning the most deeply tinted pain
back into pure white love

foolish to chase after imaginary pleasures
they love to dance out of reach
giving only tastes of slight satisfaction

simpler to give heartfelt attention
to the source of contentment
and find there is never anything missing
in this moment

then the rising water of devotion
takes the weight out of these hands
and dissolves the dreamlike boundaries
of desire itself

a world of endless contradiction
sad smiles and joyous tears
the heart is torn in two
by feelings that never fail to pull in opposite directions
torn in two
by dreams that forever dance out of reach

until at last the contents of the heart
spill out in an endless flood
of sad smiles and joyous tears
that no longer have any ambivalence
because of their shared source

words do not come
there is no need for profound utterances or
deep truths
here is an ordinary evening
why spoil it with dramatic overstatement

the silence amidst the noise
the gem at the core
of every experience
is polished by simple attention
into shining magnificence

every taste
every sensation
every possible pleasure
is already present
in the timeless
awareness
that is beating my heart
what use
in chasing dreams
that have already
come true

who would have guessed
this empty feeling in my chest
is the door to eternity

who could have known
this longing
is what I longed for

how is it possible
thoughts of freedom
only hide freedom

why don't I care
about answers
when questions never end

who would have guessed
this empty feeling in my chest could be so full

what kind of fire has no preference for fuel
gladly burning thoughts, feelings,
bodies and souls
yet it is a cool flame
leaving the core untouched

it flares whenever I give it attention
or has it always been burning this brightly

sleep comes in the afternoon
and then wakefulness never truly returns
drinking in rest like cool water
cold outside does not touch it
yawning does not disturb it
thoughts of friends in pain
can only make it more obvious
here in this quiet house
the totality comes out to play

hot sun fills the eyes to overflowing
while a cooling breeze of freedom lifts sweat from the brow
every experience from the past that visits now is recognized for what it has always been
pure food for the dreaming oneness
the banquet continues with each breath

I feast now even on heartbreak and loss
as they burst the limits I held so dear
freeing me from resisting appetite
for fear of a taste of sour fruit

I also welcome the sweet dessert of quiet moments
truth with no trimmings
a simple meal of limitless portion every tender morsel of silence
more filling than the last

desire
pure unadulterated longing
tears at the chest with such force it seems the soul might leave
just to find relief

sadness
bittersweet taste of emptiness
weighs on the shoulders
like a burden
too heavy to bear

surrender
swallowing all pride
collapsing from all effort
only to find rest again
in the depths of pain itself

why was I running from this profound
silent joy

sweeter than any kiss
the taste of eternity
lingers on my lips
tasting me

only the slightest pause
before her passion
overwhelms my feigned resistance
and takes everything I have to give

if this lover breaks my heart
there will be no pieces left

gratitude burns in the chest
glad tears run down the cheeks
strange illusion fills the eyes
the hum of life thrills the ears
no more sense of mine to senses
the body no longer belongs to anyone
leaving no one in the way
of all a body can contain
and all a body cannot touch

wonder awes the mind inspiration raises the spirit
silence soothes the doubts
intuition speaks to the soul
no more idea of someone with ideas
knowing needs no knower
freeing truth to expand
into all mind can contain
and all mind cannot even imagine

when I am held in your arms
even pain is pure bliss
dark thoughts of separation and lack
are waves of pure pleasure
unfulfilled desire is complete ecstasy

thank you for never having let go

the truth catches up with me
I am not enough
never have been
never will be
what relief to admit this finite container
can never contain infinity
what joy to find infinity needs no container

the tears flow freely now
the mind quiets and the heart breaks wide open
all the hopes and dreams of a lifetime, many lifetimes
gently washed away

longings that have burned in the mind for ages
suddenly flare up, but are quenched
the dying embers of illusion
gently washed away

and the soul thus unburdened of pretense
can barely stand to open its watery eyes
sights so intense, and yet so unreal
gently washed away

finally, a voice that speaks the simplest of truth
intermingled with sweet blissful sighs
all the remaining fears and excitements
gently laughed away

the tired wanderer
loses the strength to go on
and in surrendering to hopelessness
is surprised to finally feel at home

the hurried creek
pauses in a cold, stony pool
and in sudden stillness
arrives
at the distant ocean

the frightened warrior decides
"I am ready to die"
and in willing abandon
becomes immortal

the fitful breeze
fades to calm in the afternoon heat
and in catching its breath
is reborn
as undying tradewinds

the troubled philosopher
finds nothing to believe in
and in unexpected silence
just smiles
at the still unanswered questions

the restless sea
becomes smooth and mirrors the clouds
and in ceasing all motion
rejoins
its own depths

the saddened lover
faces the loss of illusion once again
and in dying to passion
falls in love
with love itself

the weary sun
sinks into the embrace of the horizon
and in resting at last
welcomes other shores

to a new day

memories of true love
are useless in filling empty moments
for this lover never shows the same face
always a new disguise
keeping mind in suspense
and senses alert

surrender to perpetual surprise
and find her waiting once again
in emptiness itself

body is pure doing
beyond doing there is mind
mind is pure knowing
beyond knowing there is heart
heart is pure being

mind is more than the brain
the heart of being is infinitely more
than this physical beating in the chest
all resides in this heart
the pulse of all life depends on its endless rhythm
lifting us in moments of simple awareness
beyond the limits of doing and knowing
directly to the source of our most tender feelings
and beyond even limitless love

where all is merged
in silent wonder

the passion for freedom
swallows the source of passion
if twoness could lead to oneness
we would all be faithful lovers
no reason to dream of love
for it is already here in the waking heart
find it now
in the sweet infinity
of this moment's
eternal embrace

the flower can only wait for the bee to arrive
yet passion appears from nowhere to play hide and seek with peace
all that is gained is lost once again

timeless dreams are swallowed in the yawn of an awakened sleeper
yet spring rises like a phoenix from the ashes of winter
all that is lost was never real

is the heart big enough
for the source of weeping
is the heart big enough
for this pure delight

mind plays its oldest trick
sighing woe is me
so lonely so lonely....being someone

what's this
a sweetness
in the embrace of loneliness
what deeper longing is being satisfied

I always thought you would come to me in the shape of a beautiful lover
I never dreamed you would steal my heart
with no shape at all

I always pretended I needed arms to hold me
and lips to kiss away my pain
yet I find fulfillment
in the embrace of empty space

I always wished you would speak to me
with words of tender sweetness
now I know you whisper silently
of your undying love

I always knew I would find you although I foolishly looked with my eyes
you were here all along
hiding just out of sight in my heart

a lasting marriage
when devotion has claimed you for its own
no longer any chance to stray
a brief fling with illusion no longer satisfies
the truth demands utter fidelity
with no possibility of divorce
all pain must be faced
and embraced as the true countenance of your beloved

all fear must be met
and recognized as the thrill of tasting the unknowable

all joy must be surrendered
and acknowledged as a gift with no giver

this union only requires telling the truth
even when the truth shatters your dreams
even when the truth leaves you emptied out
even when the truth reveals your counterfeit existence
then there is no other possibility than happily ever after

fire may burn the wood
the ashes do not mind

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After a lifetime of spiritual seeking, Nirmala met his teacher, Neelam, a devotee of H.W.L. Poonja (Papaji). She convinced Nirmala that seeking wasn't necessary; and after experiencing a profound spiritual awakening in India, he began offering satsang and Nondual Spiritual Mentoring with Neelam's blessing. This tradition of spiritual wisdom has been most profoundly disseminated by Ramana Maharshi, a revered Indian saint, who was Papaji's teacher. Nirmala's perspective was also profoundly expanded by his friend and teacher, Adyashanti.

Nirmala offers a unique vision and a gentle, compassionate approach, which adds to this rich tradition of inquiry into the truth of Being. He is also the author of several books including Nothing Personal: Seeing Beyond the Illusion of a Separate Self. He has been offering satsang throughout the United States and Canada since 1998. Nirmala lives in Sedona, Arizona with his wife, Gina Lake.

Visit Nirmala's website:

<http://www.endless-satsang.com>

For more info or to purchase Nirmala's other books on various ebook stores: <http://endless-satsang.com/free>

About Nondual Spiritual Mentoring with Nirmala

Nondual Spiritual Mentoring with Nirmala is available to support you in giving attention and awareness to the more subtle and yet more satisfying inner dimensions of your being. Whether it is for a single spiritual mentoring session or for ongoing one-to-one spiritual guidance, this is an opportunity for you to more completely orient your life towards the true source of peace, joy, and happiness, especially if there is not ongoing satsang or other support available in your location. As a spiritual teacher and spiritual mentor, Nirmala has worked with thousands of individuals and groups around the world to bring people into a direct experience of the spiritual truth of oneness beyond the illusion of separation. He especially enjoys working with individuals in one-to-one sessions because of the greater depth and intimacy possible.

Mentoring sessions with Nirmala are an opportunity for open-ended inquiry. In your session, you can ask any questions, raise any concerns that are meaningful to you, or simply explore your present moment experience, which is a doorway into a deeper reality. Regular weekly, biweekly, or monthly mentoring sessions can be especially transformative. These mentoring sessions are offered either in person or over the phone and typically last an hour. You can contact Nirmala at <http://endless-satsang.com/arrange-a-session.htm> to arrange a time for a spiritual mentoring session. At the arranged time, Nirmala will call you if you live in the United States or Canada. If you live in another country, you must initiate the call.

[FREE E-BOOKS AND EXCERPTS BY NIRMALA](#)

The following e-books and book excerpts are available for free at <http://endless-satsang.com/free>

Free Excerpt: Part Two of Living From the Heart

*Note: Part Two is included in this ebook as a free bonus at the end of this list. For more info or to purchase the book on various ebook stores: <http://endless-satsang.com/living>

A collection of teachings about the Heart, including:

-Part one: From the Heart: Dropping out of Your Mind and Into Your Being: Offers simple ways to shift into a more open and accepting perspective and to experience your true nature as aware space.

-Part two: The Heart's Wisdom: Points the reader back to the Heart, the truest source of wisdom.

-Part three: Love Is for Giving, Not for Getting: Points to the true source of love in your own heart. It is by giving love that we are filled with love.

Free Ebook: That Is That: Essays about True Nature

That Is That: Essays About True Nature is a free collection of articles and answers to questions posed by spiritual seekers. It captures the essence of spiritual inquiry and provides the reader with a real transmission of Presence on every page. It is much more than an exposition about our true nature as infinite consciousness, it offers an experiential exploration of who we really are, not only through the transmission in the words, but through the many thoughtful questions it raises. Nirmala's warm-hearted and accepting presence makes it possible to drop into the space he so eloquently describes, where peace, love, and joy abide. For more info or to download this free ebook at various ebook stores: <http://endless-satsang.com/that>

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What is the source of the aliveness and awareness, which are fundamental to all life? What is the nature of desire, and how do our desires relate to suffering? How do we know what is true? What is the nature of belief, and how do our beliefs affect our ability to experience the deeper reality that is always here? And in the midst of these mysteries, how do we live our daily lives in the most satisfying and integrated way? *Meeting the Mystery* explores these questions and will help you discover new dimensions and possibilities in your life. This collection of articles and answers to questions posed by spiritual seekers is a springboard to ever deeper inquiry into the greatest mystery of all—Presence, which is who you really are.

Free Excerpt: Part One of Nothing Personal, Seeing Beyond the Illusion of a Separate Self

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In this concisely edited collection of satsang talks and dialogues, Nirmala “welcomes whatever arises within the field of experience. In the midst of this welcoming is always an invitation to inquire deeply within, to the core of who and what you are. Again and again, Nirmala points the questions back to the questioner and beyond to the very source of existence itself—to the faceless awareness that holds both the question and the questioner in a timeless embrace.” –From the Foreword by Adyashanti.

“Nothing Personal is an excellent book, very clear and warm-hearted. I love it and recommend it highly. Nirmala is a genuine and authentic teacher, who points with great clarity to the simplicity and wonder of nondual presence. He invites you to ‘say yes to the mystery of every moment.’ Good stuff!” –Joan Tollifson, Advaita teacher and author of *Awake in the Heartland*

FREE BONUS SECTION:

LIVING FROM THE HEART

(Excerpt entitled The Heart's Wisdom)

Nirmala

Please note: This free bonus is part two only of the book, *Living from the Heart*.
For more info or to purchase the book on various ebook stores: <http://endless-satsang.com/free>

Endless Satsang Foundation

This book consists of three related teachings about the Heart by Nirmala. They were previously offered as downloads on www.endless-satsang.com. The poetry is from *Gifts with No Giver* by Nirmala.

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THE HEART'S WISDOM

The truth is that which opens the Heart. The capacity to sense the truth is something we all already have. We all have a Heart that is already accurately showing us how true things are.

Anything that puts you in touch with more of the truth opens the Heart. This is a literal and experiential description of truth. When your experience is bringing you more truth, there is a sense of opening, softening, relaxation, expansion, fulfillment, and satisfaction in the Heart. This can be most directly sensed in the center of the chest, but the Heart of all Being is infinite and therefore actually bigger than your entire body. So this opening, softening, and expansion is actually happening everywhere; we just sense it most clearly and directly in the center of the chest.

When you encounter truth, the sense of your self opens, expands, softens, fills in, and lets go. The *me*, the sense of your self, is no longer felt to be so limited or small. It becomes more complete and unbounded. The boundaries soften and dissolve, and any sense of inadequacy, limitation, or deficiency is lessened or eliminated.

As a side effect of being in touch with more of the truth, your mind gets quieter because you simply have less to think about. Even knowing a simple truth like where your car keys are gives you less to think about. And when you touch upon a very large truth, your mind becomes even

quieter, like when you see the ocean for the first time: The truth or reality you're viewing is so immense that, at least for a moment, your mind is stopped and becomes very quiet.

In contrast, when your experience is moving into a diminished or smaller experience of the truth and of reality, the Heart contracts. The sense of your self gets tight, hard, contracted, and feels incomplete, bounded, and limited. It can feel like you are small, inadequate, or unworthy. The smallness of the truth is reflected in the smallness of the sense of your self. The result of being less in touch with the truth is that your mind gets busier as it tries to figure out what is true.

Fortunately, your Being is never diminished or contracted, only the *sense* of your self. Just as blocking your view of the whole room by partially covering your eyes makes your sense of the room smaller without actually making the room smaller, an idea or belief that is not very true is reflected in a small sense of your self, without actually limiting or contracting your Being.

This opening and closing of the Heart in response to the degree of truth you are experiencing isn't something you need to practice or perfect. Your Heart has been accurately and perfectly showing you how true your experience has been all along. If you start to notice your Heart's openings and closings, you'll discover that you already have everything you need to determine what is true. The Heart is the true inner teacher, the source of inner guidance we all have as our birthright. You don't need a spiritual teacher or spiritual books to show you what is true, just your own Heart.

***Exercise:** Take a moment to sense your Heart. Dropping into the Heart can help you get more in touch with what is happening there. Notice if the Heart feels relatively contracted or relatively open. In either case, your Heart is working perfectly to show you the degree of truth you are experiencing in this moment. Also notice if your Heart is expanding or contracting in this moment. The movement might be subtle or a fairly gross contraction or relaxation. You may be able to notice that the Heart is always shifting in response to every thought, feeling, desire, and experience that arises in your awareness. There is no wrong way for your Heart to respond. It is always showing you the relative truth of this moment.*

WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

Truth is what exists, what is here now. So if what exists is also what is true, then there is only truth. Whatever is present is true—but to varying degrees. Just as there is no actual substance or energy that is darkness, but just varying amounts of the energy of light or photons, there is no falsehood or untruth, only varying degrees of the truth.

We are always experiencing the truth. But because we don't experience everything in any one moment, our experience of truth is always limited. Sometimes we experience a large amount of truth—of what is actually here—and sometimes we experience only a small amount of what is actually happening, of what is true. Our Heart's openness or lack of openness in each moment is what shows us how much of the truth is being experienced in any moment.

What about ideas that are mistaken? An idea or belief that has little or no correspondence to external reality is going to be an extremely small truth, so small it may only exist in one person's mind, like the saying: "He was a legend in his own mind." When you experience an erroneous idea or belief, your Heart will contract appropriately to show you that it is a very small and inconsequential truth.

For example, if you entertain the idea that you will never be happy unless you have ten million dollars, your Heart will contract appropriately to show you that it is just an idea. This

contraction may be very quick, so quick that it doesn't cause you any discomfort or trouble. But if you really believe this, then the sense of your self will contract for as long as that idea is held.

***Exercise:** For just a moment, hold onto a limiting thought, such as "I will never have enough time," and notice the response in your Heart. Does that thought allow you to relax and be, or does it require a kind of effort or contraction just to hold it? Now consider another thought that you find ridiculous because it is so untrue, such as "I will never be happy unless I become President of the United States." Notice how it might not even be possible to hold onto this thought. It might even make you laugh. Many jokes end with a ridiculously impossible truth (e.g., "And then the dog said to its owner, 'I guess I should have said Dimaggio instead of Ruth') and the smallness of the truth of the punch line causes you to let go of believing in it. Laughter is a wonderful movement into a bigger perspective!*

Thoughts are real—they exist—but they still exist only as ideas. You could put all the thoughts ever thought into a pile, and they still wouldn't trip anybody. They only exist as neural firings in the brain, so to focus on thoughts exclusively is to severely limit or contract your experience of reality and therefore the sense of your self.

In the range of everyday experience, our ideas have varying degrees of correspondence with reality. Those that correspond more closely to reality won't contract or limit the sense of self for as long as mistaken ones. Many ideas are of service to our ability to be at ease in the world. For example, when you need to go someplace, correct ideas about how to get there allow you to simply go there and then move on to other experiences. Ideas such as these can enhance our experience, rather than limit or contract it. An idea about where something is located is, of course, not a big truth, but it's also not usually experienced as a limiting one.

THE HEART'S CAPACITY TO SHOW YOU THE TRUTH

All there is, is truth, and our Heart's capacity to reflect the degree of truth in any experience is the way we recognize how true a particular experience is.

What is this Heart? What is this sense of self that is ever present? It doesn't relate to sensations in the physical heart or chest. It's a more subtle sense, at times even more subtle than the physical senses, although the opening or contracting can also be experienced as relaxation and contraction in the physical body. The sense of your self, the sense that you exist, is something more intimate than your physical experience.

What does it mean when you say *me*? What are you referring to when you say *me*? This simple fact that we are here, that we exist, is a very mysterious aspect of our experience. When we speak of it poetically to try to capture its essence, we call it the Heart, like when you know something in your Heart or when your Heart is touched.

This sense of your self is a very alive and changing experience. At times, your sense of *me* is open, free-flowing, and expanded. At other times, like when a judgment arises, it feels small, inadequate, and deficient. In these moments, have you actually changed? Has your body suddenly shrunk? Much of the time this sense of *me* is bigger than or smaller than your physical body. How does that work? Have you ever experienced your inner child? How can your *me* be the size of a child when you are an adult?

The sense of *me*, the sense of self, is shifting all the time. It's always either opening and expanding, or contracting and tightening, similar to the ongoing expansion and contraction of our

breathing.

Exercise: Consider the idea that it is better to be thinner or more beautiful or younger than you are, and notice what happens to the sense of your self. Does your Heart open, soften, and expand? Does this idea allow you to simply be? Or does it tighten and restrict the flow of your experience?

Then just for contrast, notice what happens to the sense of your self if you consider the idea that you are okay just the way you are. It might be challenging to consider this idea without other thoughts being triggered, such as “But I’m not really good enough!” If this happens, your Heart will show you how true this response is, not how true the original idea of okayness is.

Just as an experiment, see if you can hold the idea that you’re okay just the way you are, and then notice what happens in your Heart. Does this idea allow your Heart to open, soften, and expand? Does it allow you to simply be? Or does it tighten and restrict the flow of your experience? For most, the idea of being okay just the way they are allows a greater ease and fullness to the experience of the self.

The idea that it is better to be thinner, more beautiful, or younger than you are is simply a smaller truth than the idea that you are perfect the way you are. Even if you *are* beautiful, thin, or young, the idea that it is better to be that way can limit the sense of your self. If it’s better to be that way, can you just relax and be, or do you need to do something to stay that way?

In contrast, a neutral idea that doesn’t state or imply anything about you can be experienced neutrally in your sense of self. For example, if you consider the color of the ceiling in someone else’s house, this usually won’t open or close your Heart because it’s not about you and probably doesn’t imply anything about you. The sense of your self doesn’t shift in response to neutral ideas like this.

This opening and closing of the Heart is not a prescription—something you need to practice—but simply a description of what your Heart has been doing your entire life. Whatever does happen in the sense of self in any moment is entirely correct and appropriate. It’s appropriate for your Heart to close when someone is telling you a small, limiting truth; and it’s appropriate for your Heart to open when you experience a deep and profound reality.

THE HEART’S QUICKNESS

Your Heart is incredibly quick. It instantly knows how true something is and instantly opens or closes to that degree. It’s so fast that it never really lands anywhere. It is always either opening or closing in response to each moment.

So if a thought triggers another thought, the Heart will then be reflecting the relative truth of the triggered thought, not the original one. And if this triggered thought triggers another one, then your Heart will reflect how true the latest thought is. The openness of your Heart can shift very rapidly, as rapidly as you can think another thought!

I was working with a woman once who had difficulty taking time for herself. I asked her to check in her Heart to see how true it is that it is okay to take time for herself. She closed her eyes for a moment, and when I asked her what had happened, she said she felt an intense contraction. I was surprised, so I asked her to tell me exactly what had happened. She said she thought, “It’s okay to take time for myself,” and then immediately decided this would be selfish, and her Heart contracted. Her Heart was showing her how true it was that it would be selfish to take time for

herself. It was no longer reflecting the truth of the idea that it is okay to take time for herself.

In the quickness of our usual rapid-fire thinking, it can be tricky to determine what your Heart is actually responding to. Therefore, when checking in your Heart to see how true something is, it is helpful to slow down and take each thought or each possibility one at a time.

***Exercise:** Take a moment to think about a situation in your life. Notice if there are any familiar or recurring thoughts about that situation. Pick one of the main ideas, beliefs, opinions, or attitudes you have about that situation or about someone or something related to it. Now just hold that thought gently in your awareness. Repeat it to yourself a few times, and as you do, notice what happens in your Heart. Does it open and soften, or is there a kind of tightness or hardness that starts to form in your awareness? Remember, either way your Heart is working perfectly to show you how true the thought is.*

See if you can hold that one simple thought for a moment, almost like a child completely engrossed in whatever he or she is looking at. Holding a thought for a moment gives you a clearer picture of the relative truth of that thought, as indicated by your Heart's response while you are focusing completely on it.

If your mind wanders and you find yourself having second and third thoughts, or even a whole conversation with yourself about the situation, that's fine. Just note that the Heart has moved on along with your thoughts and is now showing you the truth of the thought you are having in this moment.

THE ROLE OF JUDGMENTS

Not only can an initial thought or experience trigger other thoughts, the opening or closing of your Heart can itself trigger a thought or judgment that results in the further closing of the Heart and a sense of your self as limited or small. If you are a spiritual seeker and have come to believe that it is better for your Heart to be open than closed, then a sudden contraction of the sense of your self can trigger a further judgment related to not wanting to be contracted, which closes the Heart even further. Test it for yourself:

***Exercise:** If you hold the idea that you shouldn't feel contracted, does your Heart open? Does that idea allow you to just be? Or does it tighten or limit the sense of your self? The idea that you shouldn't feel contracted is a limiting idea and usually feels tight or limited because it is simply not very true.*

There is a certain kind of logic to this cycle of judgment, even though it results in a restricted sense of self: When the sense of your self contracts, your awareness also contracts and becomes limited, and your *unawareness* expands. When your field of awareness becomes smaller, the rest of reality lies outside your awareness in that moment. The logic of judgment is based on this simple effect. As a result of a judgment, you become less aware of your experience and temporarily less aware of the initial discomfort that triggered the judgment. Therefore, you get some relief from it. The logic of judgment is based on this temporary relief provided by the reduction in your awareness.

However, the flaw in this logic is that now that contraction of your awareness must be maintained or you will become aware again of the initial discomfort. Maintaining a contraction is, itself, uncomfortable. Try making a tight fist and holding it for several moments. It will

quickly begin to feel uncomfortable. Similarly, when you keep your awareness contracted to avoid an uncomfortable sensation, this generates even more discomfort.

So when a cycle of judgment is triggered, the sense of your self and your awareness keep getting smaller as you try to avoid the ever-increasing discomfort caused by this same contraction of your sense of self and your awareness. This often continues until you are exhausted by the effort involved in maintaining vigilance against your discomfort, and you simply let go of any judgment.

The good news is that whenever you are not contracting your sense of self through small truths, such as judgments, the sense of your self naturally relaxes and opens. An open, spacious sense of self is the natural resting state of your Being, just as your muscles naturally lengthen and expand in the absence of any effort to contract them. So when a cycle of judgment wears you out, there is sometimes a profound release of the small sense of self and the contraction of awareness. In light of this, it's not surprising that many realizations and spiritual awakenings occur immediately following an extremely contracted and painful experience.

More good news is that the tendency to judge is not your fault. You were taught to do it by those who raised you, who were taught by those who raised them. They did this because it was the best way they knew to manage their own discomfort. When parents are confronted with the unlimited Being of a two year-old (and we all know how big that can be), they often resort to the best means they know for giving that two year-old a more limited sense of his or her Being: judgment.

We eventually learned to do this for ourselves. We learned to judge ourselves and hold limiting ideas about ourselves to get along with the people around us, especially those who clothed and fed us.

Judgment is just one of the many ways we limit our experience of the truth and thereby limit our experience of our self. Other culprits are our ideas, beliefs, opinions, concepts, doubts, fears, worries, hopes, dreams, desires, and our usual knowledge. Judgment is just one of the more effective ways of limiting the sense of our self because it always implies something limiting about the self.

***Exercise:** Make a list of some of the judgments you have about yourself, life, and other people. Pick ones that you really believe. Now read through your list several times and notice the sense you have of yourself as you do this. Does holding these judgments give you a sense of yourself as someone in particular, someone who has a very definite perspective on life? Do you feel more connected with others and with the world, or do you feel more separate and apart from the world? Even if that separate sense of self feels superior because it has the right judgments, how big or open and relaxed is your sense of self when you have these judgments?*

This implied someone in all of your judgments is always a small someone, someone who is limited and therefore vulnerable to something bad or who needs to feel superior or for something good to happen to feel better or even survive. The ultimate truth is that you are unlimited. Your Being can never be harmed—or benefited—by any experience. Only a smaller (less true) idea of your self can seem to be harmed or benefited.

POSITIVE JUDGMENT

What was said about negative judgments applies to positive judgments as well. When some

experience triggers a positive judgment, the sense of our self contracts just as much as when we have a negative judgment. Test this for yourself:

***Exercise:** Think about something you have a very strong positive judgment of, like your favorite movie or something you have done that you are very proud of. Notice what happens to the sense of your self when you have a positive thought about this. If you find yourself thinking something like, “Great! This is wonderful—wait until I tell my friends!” notice what happens to the sense of your self. You may be surprised to find that your Heart isn’t as open as it was before the positive judgment. A big truth allows you to relax and just be however you are and to change in any way that naturally happens. A positive idea about your self implies that you have to continue to be a certain way to be okay.*

Implied even in positive judgments is an idea of yourself as someone who is limited—someone who needs good things to happen to be okay and feel adequate. There’s nothing wrong with something good happening; it’s just that even your positive judgments are small truths that are based on a small idea of your self. Your Heart will contract just as much for a small positive truth as for a small negative truth.

Fortunately, there’s nothing you need to do about a small truth beyond recognizing it’s small. Besides, even small truths can be useful. So there is no need to try to rid yourself of them, which isn’t even possible. Seeing that they are small immediately puts them in perspective. Then, when they arise, they are seen as no big deal. You might still think them, but no matter how often they arise, you recognize them as relatively unimportant.

You have probably experienced this ability of a bigger truth to displace or put in perspective a smaller truth. For example, if you or someone you love is suddenly diagnosed with a life-threatening disease, what really matters becomes obvious. The truth, or reality, of a possible death makes many other truths appear small and insignificant in comparison.

You don’t need to wait for a big truth to hit you over the head to put your experience in perspective. Simply notice how true each thought is. Experiences come in all different sizes. You are always moving in and out of different degrees of truth, and you are naturally able to discriminate how true each one is. You can determine how truly important something is just by noticing the content of your thought and the sense of self it results in. If it opens and relaxes the sense of your self, your Heart, then it is truly important. If it contracts or limits the sense of your self, your Heart, then it’s not.

ALL TRUTH IS RELATIVE

Truth is all there is. Yet our experience of truth, of reality, is always partial. Right now your field of vision is partial. You can only see what is in front of you, not what’s behind you. Similarly, your Heart is always showing you the degree of truth of the experience you are having in the moment.

Your view or range of experience is always opening and closing, filling in the blanks in your experience or forgetting or ignoring parts of your experience. Whenever you focus on a particular aspect of experience, you necessarily stop noticing other aspects. As a result, any particular perspective is either smaller and more limited, larger and more complete, or roughly the same degree of completeness as another perspective.

The openness of the sense of your self is always relative. Because truth is always relative,

any particular truth could be experienced as an opening or a closing of your Heart. Even a small experience of the truth may be larger than the experience you were just having and therefore will be experienced as an opening or relaxation in your Heart. Similarly, even a fairly large truth can feel limiting if you move into it from an even larger, more spacious experience.

For example, if you've lived most of your life paying attention to your thoughts and ideas, then the first time you are put in touch with your emotions will be experienced as an expansion of consciousness. It will feel like you've discovered a new, rich dimension of your Being.

However, if you've had many even larger experiences of much more expanded states of Being, possibly through spiritual practices, then moving into a strong emotion like anger, sadness, or excitement may be experienced as a contraction or diminishment of the sense of your self. The same truth, the same experience of emotion, can be experienced as either an opening up in your Heart or a closing down. It just depends on where you move into the emotion from and also how open or expanded the sense of your self generally is.

The difference can be slight between two experiences with similar degrees of truth or unimaginably huge. The true dimensions of your Being are limitless. You are everything, and when you directly experience this completeness, the sense of self can be equally vast and limitless.

YOUR PERFECT WISDOM

Your Heart is the wisest thing in the universe. The sense of your self is always perfectly and accurately showing you how true things are, how complete your perspective is in every moment. Even when your Heart is contracted because of some deeply conditioned idea you are holding, it is appropriately and accurately wise in its contraction.

No one has more capacity to distinguish how true things are than anyone else. No one is wiser than you, and no one is less wise than you. Since no one else is able to experience your individual perspective, no one else can ever be more of an expert on your experience than you. Just as someone else can't eat and digest your breakfast for you, others can't experience and digest your perspective of the truth in each moment.

If no Heart is any wiser than any other, perhaps that's because there is just one Heart that functions through many bodies and yet is not contained in any of these particular expressions. What you are is this one Heart of Being.

Since we are all equally endowed with the wisdom of the Heart, there is no need to give away our authority to another. There is nothing better than your own Heart at discriminating how true something is for you right now.

In addition, the thoughts that cause contraction are not your fault. Your thoughts and beliefs were passed on to you by others, who learned them from others. If you trace each conditioned thought or reaction back to its source, you'll discover that all limiting beliefs and ideas are shared among us all. If anyone is to blame for them, it's all of us put together. Another way you could say this is that the whole of Being is the source of everything, even the limited ways we have of experiencing that Being.

With this understanding, the possibility exists to simply trust your Heart, no matter how big or small the truth is that you are experiencing. You can trust your Heart when it opens, and you can trust it when it closes. Your Heart is the wisest and most trustworthy thing there is. In the deepest spiritual traditions, the true teacher, or *satguru*, is seen to be within each of us. Your true teacher is this sensitive and accurate Heart, which expands and contracts as it senses the endless

folding and unfolding of life.

APPLYING YOUR HEART'S WISDOM

Because the Heart responds so quickly to what's happening now. . . and now. . . and now, it's helpful to slow down and take your experience one thought or response at a time if you wish to find out how true it is. Just as you can more fully appreciate a meal if you take each bite and savor it, the possibility exists to take time to fully sense a thought that arises.

For example, let's say you remember a disappointing experience and then the thought arises, "My life will never be good enough." Before you rush into thinking of all the ways this is true or, alternatively, defending yourself with reasons why it isn't true, you might take a moment to sense directly how this thought affects the sense of your self. Then, when you know for yourself how true this thought is all by itself, it may be obvious that it is neither completely true nor completely false. If it is sensed directly as a relatively small truth about your life, it may not even be necessary to defend against it with an opposing thought. Sensing how true an initial thought is in this way can reduce the importance of any ensuing thoughts.

Another practical way of exploring and utilizing your Heart's truth-sensing capacity is to check in your Heart when making a choice. By doing that, you can find out what choice is the truer one. However, when it comes to relative choices (e.g., what to do, what to eat, where to live, who to marry, etc.), the differences may be slight in your Heart. From the ultimate perspective, the practical choices we make in life may not be that important. So it may take a while to learn to accurately sense the differences in how true various choices are. But just as a wine connoisseur can learn to discriminate the subtlest difference in flavors, you can learn to sense even very small differences in how true a choice is relative to another.

When checking in your Heart for the truth about some choice, it's helpful to consider as many choices as possible. The truest one may be somewhere in between the possibilities you've considered, or it may be something completely different. For example, a friend was torn between her desire to go permanently on spiritual retreat and her desire to stay with her husband. Neither option felt completely true in her Heart. When I suggested that maybe she could stay with her husband but still go away for long periods of time on spiritual retreats, her Heart opened, as she sensed this was the truest way to respond to both desires.

***Exercise:** Think of a choice you are considering in your life. It might be best to pick something where you have a decision to make that isn't too important and not too immediate so that you can really explore the process of comparing the truth of your choices. Make a list of possible choices you could make, and be sure to include some that are in between or completely different from the first two options you come up with.*

Now really take some time with each choice and sense your Heart's response as you hold in mind the idea of making that choice. Again, keep it simple, and just picture having made the choice, and let go of secondary considerations, such as pros and cons and further ramifications. Notice whether considering a particular choice results in a spacious, easeful sense in your Heart or a contracted sense of your own self. There is no right or wrong way for your Heart to respond. Just notice the way it does respond.

Include the thought that it doesn't matter what you choose. In many cases, the biggest truth about your choices is that what you choose doesn't really matter. If that is the case, then that thought or perspective will give you the most room to just be, and the largest sense of yourself.

Finally, when considering the relative truth of various possible choices, it is also helpful to check in your Heart several times over a period of time. Especially when making major life choices, checking numerous times before acting is more likely to result in a more satisfying outcome. For example, if you want to know if it's true to stay in an intimate relationship, you might find a different result right after an argument than right after your lover has surprised you with a gift. It's a bigger perspective to find out what is truest over the long term than just what is true in the present moment.

The Heart is wise and accurate and can show you how true it is to stay or go, how true it is to buy a house, how true it is to take a new job, even how true it is to eat another cookie. But it also can show you much more of the possibilities inherent in this life and much more of the truth of your Being. In relation to these bigger truths, the practical questions of your life turn out to be relatively small matters. Using your Heart only to know things like what to do or where to live is like using a global positioning satellite system to find your way from your bedroom to your bathroom. It utilizes only a small part of your Heart's capacity.

However, following your Heart day in and day out can put you in touch with the richness of the functioning of this dimension of your Being. Along the way, you may also find your Heart opening in response to the bigger truths and deeper movements of Being that touch every life.

***Exercise:** For a moment, sense if there is any Peace here. Don't worry how much or if there's only a little bit of Peace here right now. Just notice if you can sense any Peace at all. Now focus your attention on that Peace that is here beneath the flow of thoughts or feelings. Give yourself permission to really sense the nature of Peace and the deep stillness in that experience. As you touch Peace with your awareness, notice if there really is any boundary to the stillness at the core of this moment. Don't worry about doing this right, but just taste as much of the Peace that is here right now as you can.*

Now notice the sense of your own Being. Focusing on Peace may have relaxed or opened your sense of self profoundly or just a little. Notice if this has softened or expanded your Heart.

THE MANY SIZES OF TRUTH

The deepest and largest truths don't fit into words or language. While words can act as pointers, your Heart will open the widest and the sense of your self will feel the most complete and full in response to the direct experience of the vast dimensions of Being that are beyond thoughts and beliefs. As always, your own Heart is the truest guide to these larger dimensions and possibilities, but the reason the sense of your self expands when your view of the truth is more complete is because you *are* the truth. You are everything that exists. When you are experiencing more of the truth, you are experiencing more of your self.

The truth comes in many different sizes. One of the primary ways you create and maintain a small sense of self is through a profound involvement with thought. We've been taught from an early age to think, conceptualize, and name things. Because there is such a huge momentum to thinking, moments without a thought happening are rare. Thinking is such a prevalent part of our moment-to-moment experience that many of us live mostly in our minds.

Adding to this momentum of thought are strongly held assumptions and beliefs about the world and yourself, many of which are unconscious. This deeper current of thought also serves to create and maintain a small, separate sense of self. As a result of all of our conscious thinking

and unconscious assumptions and beliefs, most people live in awareness of a very small part of reality, most of which only exists in their mind.

This momentum of small truths is reflected in a momentum to your small sense of self. This leads to the question of what to do about it. Unfortunately, any idea about what to do about it is just that—an idea, another thought. However, what *is* possible is to simply be aware of the prevalence of thought in your experience. This awareness is not really something you do, as awareness is a fundamental quality of what you are. Just as you don't need to do anything to have shoulders, you don't need to do anything extra right now to be aware—and to be aware of your thinking.

Exercise: *What is thinking like right now? You can notice not only the content of your thoughts, but also the rhythm and speed of your thoughts, the ebb and flow of thought. Where do thoughts come from and where do they go? What happens if there is a pause between thoughts?*

How is the sense of your self affected by this flow of thought? Do you need to think in order to be? Does thinking give your sense of self a familiar smallness and sense of boundaries? Is it uncomfortable to not know something in this moment, to not have a thought?

The invitation is to just notice thought and its effect on the sense of your self. Any idea of changing your experience is just another thought that will have a similar effect on the sense of your self. Why not simply find out what thought is like? Experience for yourself how true each thought is. There's nothing wrong with small truths—they're just small. What if all of your thinking is not that big a deal? What if your thinking is just not a very large container for the truth? Thinking can only contain a small amount of the truth.

There is no need to get rid of thought. Once you experience that thought is not a very large container for the truth, this gives way to another question: What else is here besides thought? What else is true? As you sense the prevalence of thought and possibly even the deeper current of unconscious beliefs and assumptions, you may also begin to sense what surrounds and contains thought.

Drop into your Heart and notice the space all around your thoughts. What effect does dropping into your Heart have on your sense of self?

THE DEEPER CURRENTS OF THOUGHT

Many beliefs and assumptions shape and limit our experience of truth and the sense of our self even when we aren't consciously thinking them. They are ideas and concepts that are so deeply believed that they aren't even questioned, such as "Life is short" or "There's never enough time." Furthermore, these beliefs and assumptions generate other thoughts, which add to the momentum of thinking and keep your Heart, the sense of your self, small and contracted.

Two deeper currents of thought strongly shape the experience of your self. The first is the belief in a direction to your life. Usually this direction is toward more, different, or better experiences. But sometimes it's framed in opposite terms as not less, the same, or not worse. In either case, there is a deeply held belief that life should move or change in a particular way.

Of course, things do change, which keeps the hope alive that they will change in the way you want them to. This deeply held assumption that things could or should be better implies a small *you*. The directionality of this assumption is based on a reference point: Things should be better—for *you*. If things should be better for *you*, then *you* must be lacking something. This assumption and the thinking it generates help maintain a small, contracted sense of your self

because that is the implied reference point of the assumption—a small *you*.

The second, even deeper and less conscious current of thought that serves to maintain a contracted sense of self is the assumption that physical experience is the most real. This is such a widely held assumption that any other orientation could get you labeled crazy. Even very sensitive and spiritually-oriented people who have had very real and profound experiences of other dimensions are often pulled by this assumption back toward the physical into a more limited experience of truth and their own Being.

There are many dimensions to reality besides the purely physical, and as a human being, your experience includes all of these dimensions. There are the dimensions of thought, emotion, and intuition. And beyond those, are dimensions of pure presence and spacious Being. Many of these dimensions are more real than even physical reality. Experiences of this transcendent reality give you a transcendent sense of your self that is much fuller and more complete than the purely physical sense of your self.

THE THOUGHT THAT YOU ARE THE BODY

The idea that your life could or should be better and the idea that physical reality is the most real animate an even more basic assumption: that you are the body. Your sense of your self, and therefore the experience of your Being, is most often shaped and limited by your identification with the body, which results in the ongoing question, How is it going for the body? Is it better, more pleasurable, or at least not painful right now for the body? This orientation toward the body isn't bad, but it is a limited way of experiencing reality and your self. It's like watching only one channel on your television: It's something, but it's limited.

This limitation can affect every experience you have. By focusing on how it's going for your body, you can miss some of the richest and most profound possibilities in life. The biggest truths may not even be particularly comfortable for your body. Profound states of love and bliss can be exhausting from a purely physical perspective. The deepest realizations of the nature of your Being can be so vast and expansive as to feel like a death for your identity as the body.

Asking what you can do about this limitation will only reinforce it. Another possibility is to explore the sense of limitation that identification with the body gives to your awareness and your Heart.

Exercise: What is it like to believe you are the body right now? Does this allow your Heart to open and relax? Or does it result in a small sense of your self? There is nothing wrong with small truths; they just aren't very complete. You don't have to get rid of or change small truths. Just recognizing they are small is enough.

With the recognition of the incompleteness of identifying with the body, a larger curiosity often arises: What else is true about you? Are you more than the body? What other channels are there on this television called your life? What else is going on here?

THE SENSE OF ME

Beneath the assumption that you are the body is an even deeper one. The idea that you are the body is predicated on the assumption that *you* exist, that you are a *me*—a separate, individual self. The most intimate sense of your self is often this sense of *me*, which is a limited and incomplete sensing of your self. It doesn't include the far reaches of your greater Being. This

sense of a separate *me* is not bad or wrong; it's just limited and incomplete.

In the midst of a very profound and large experience of truth, the sense of your self can become so large and inclusive that it no longer has much of a sense of being *your* Being. When you awaken to the oneness of all things, the sense of a *me* can thin out quite dramatically. If *you* are the couch you are sitting on, the clouds in the sky, and everything else, then it simply doesn't make sense to call it all *me*. If it is so much more than what you usually take yourself to be, then the term *me* is just too small.

In a profound experience of truth, the sense of *me* softens and expands to such a degree that there is only a slight sense of *me* as a separate self remaining, perhaps just as the observer of the vastness of truth. Beyond these profound experiences of the truth, is the truth itself. When you are in touch with the ultimate truth and the most complete sense of Being, there is nothing separate remaining to sense itself—there is no experience and no experiencer, no Heart, and no sense of self. There is only Being.

The experience of bigger truths and even the biggest truth doesn't obliterate your capacity to experience a small truth and therefore a separate self. But with many experiences of shifting in and out of a small sense of self, this separate self feels more like a suit of clothes you can take on and off than like something permanent. As you move in and out of many dimensions of Being and even beyond experience itself, the boundaries between all of these dimensions become very permeable and inconsequential. It turns out that these boundaries are just thoughts anyway. They don't actually separate anything.

The question isn't how to get rid of a small sense of self, but what is the sense of your self like? Is it fixed or is it constantly shifting—opening and closing, expanding and contracting, tightening and loosening, and sometimes even disappearing altogether? The sense of a separate self can therefore be loosely held even though it continues to contract appropriately when a small truth is triggered.

What is your sense of self like right now? What is true right now? Your Heart is the only guide you need for exploring even the biggest truths.

THERE IS ONLY LOVE

Anything you or anyone else has ever done has been the movement of love. What shapes the movement of love is the sense of *me*. What we are always doing is taking care of the self, whether it is a small sense of self or a more expanded one. Whenever that sense of self is contracted and small, we take care of that *me*. And when it's expanded, we take care of that larger sense of self. All we have ever done is tried to take care of the self in the best way we know how, which is always a loving act.

But, of course, when our actions only take care of a contracted *me*, they don't take care of or take into account other things. For example, we might take care of our taste buds by eating tasty foods, while ignoring our body's need for nutrition. Or if we are so identified with a feeling that all we can do is take care of it, we may not be taking care of our whole Being. Taking care of only the taste buds or only the emotions is still a loving act, but because it is such a narrow way of loving ourselves, it can be neglectful or even harmful to other aspects of our Being or to others.

If we see love in everything we may be afraid that we will allow rape, murder, and other horribly narrow ways of taking care of a small separate sense of *me* to continue. Yet in discovering that there is only love, the surprising thing is that our actions naturally become more

loving. If we see murder as an evil that needs to be abolished without also seeing its basic loving nature, that is when it makes sense to murder. If murder is really bad, then it makes sense to kill someone who has murdered someone else. Or it even makes sense to kill someone before they kill us. It makes sense to bomb a country before it attacks us. But when we see the loving nature even of murder, we can respond to it in a way that doesn't perpetuate it, even as we work to prevent it.

It is possible to recognize the love that is already inside of us and already acting through all of us. It is in recognizing that love that the possibility exists for even greater recognition of love. Contrarily, when we reject any aspect of love—which includes anything that's happening—the more contracted our experience will be and the less completely loving our actions will be. So in condemning, we actually become more like what we condemn. Seeing the beauty, perfection, and love within something is what allows it to transform, to move into a more complete way of loving.

When the sense of our self expands, our actions aren't really any more loving; they're just more loving toward a more complete view of the self. When our loving actions take care of a larger sense of ourselves, we appear more saint-like because they are taking into account everybody, since we recognize that we *are* everybody. These actions are still self-gratifying, but they are gratifying to a much broader sense of self.

When the awareness of self becomes even more complete, you come to see that there is ultimately nothing that needs to be changed or fixed. Everything is already fine. The world already is full of love. Your actions and everyone else's are already loving. Whatever Being is doing is Being taking care of itself. That is all it ever does or ever has done.

This leads to an appreciation of everything you do and everything that happens, an appreciation of the way Being moves every time it moves. Love is pouring out everywhere. There's no evidence of the lack of love. What a surprise to discover this in a world that seems so full of problems and things that need to be changed.

TRUE FREEDOM

In this culture where more is felt to be better, there is often an implication that bigger truths are better. If your Heart can open and expand, then it may seem best to find a way to open the darn thing all the way and keep it that way.

However, if you check in your Heart right now as you hold the idea that it's better to open your Heart and keep it that way, you may be surprised to find that this idea actually feels tight or limiting. It's simply not the biggest truth or the most freeing possibility. An even bigger, freer possibility is to allow the sense of your self to be whatever size it is. If your Heart is always accurately and appropriately opening or contracting to show you how true each moment's perspective is, then the best result of experiencing a small truth is for your Heart to contract and show you how small that truth is. It can be as liberating to find out that a small truth is small as to find out that a vast dimension of Being is profoundly real. In both cases, the nature of truth has been more fully illuminated.

Once you realize you can trust your Heart just the way it is right now, whether it is open or closed, you can just rest within the folding and unfolding of all perspectives. You don't do anything to get rid of the small perspectives, which just arise out of the conditioned parts of your Being, and you don't do anything to bring on the bigger perspectives, which just arise out of the unconditioned parts of your Being. You just rest in the moment as it is.

There is never a need to have a bigger or smaller experience, as Being is still Being even in the small experiences. Its nature is the same, and part of its nature is this capacity to discriminate how true—how complete—a particular perspective is. The small experiences of Being are still an expression of Being's ultimate nature, just as a single drop of water is still wet.

Spiritual seekers often think of liberation as staying in an expanded experience of truth. While expanded experiences are freeing (especially when you've been contracted for a long time), the ability to move in and out of many different perspectives is an even greater freedom. Walls are only a problem when you don't know where the door is and therefore can't get in or out.

True freedom is when you can move in and out of identification with a small sense of your self. You don't have to take my word for it. Find out what happens in your Heart if you just let the opening and closing of your sense of self be just the way it is right now. Does this allow your Heart to open? Does it allow you to just be for a moment?

WHO ARE YOU?

What is this Being that you are always sensing to some degree? Perhaps the most surprising discovery is that the sense of your self is not showing you anything about your true nature. A limited sense of your self is never about who you really are! It's not indicative of who you are but, rather, shows you how true your conditioning is. Recognizing this can turn your world inside out. The sense of your self is being shaped and limited by the unfolding of conditioned beliefs and ideas; it's not a reflection of your true nature.

This can be a tremendous relief. All of your experiences of limitation, incompleteness, contraction, insufficiency, or unworthiness have nothing to do with you! Instead, they are accurate reflections of the limitations, incompleteness, smallness, insufficiency, and unworthiness of your ideas, judgments, beliefs, concepts, fears, doubts, worries, hopes, dreams, and desires. They have nothing to do with the nature of you.

The most intimate experience of your self—your Heart—is ultimately never a *complete* experience of your true self. It is always a *relative* experience of the functioning of that true self as it determines the *relative* degree of truth in the particular content of your experience.

This brings us back to the question: Who or what is the Being that you are always sensing to a greater or lesser degree? This question points to what is completely beyond words—and even beyond experience. Even the most expanded *experience* of Being is still not free of this shaping or limitation. In this case the question itself points to a bigger truth than any answer, even an experiential one.

What happens in your Heart when you simply hold the question, Who am I or what am I? Even if your Heart is open, you can still wonder who or what is experiencing the openness. The ultimate truth will never be captured in an experience because it's simply too big to fit in even the most expanded experience. This provides a clue to the question, Who are you? The reason an expanded sense of your self never quite contains the *whole* truth of your Being is that you *are* everything that exists.

Perhaps you can rest now from the dream of experiencing the ultimate truth. The truth is not dependent in any way on your experience of it. It is and always has been functioning just fine through what you call your experience of a self, without ever being contained in that experience. The sense of your self, whether it is expanded or contracted, is a functioning expression of a much larger Being that can never be fully captured in experience.

Perhaps the *experience* of truth doesn't need to be captured. Truth is something we can also unfold gradually bit by bit like a meal or novel that we slowly savor rather than rush through. We are and always have been realizing the truth even when we experience only a small part of it. The richness of Being is also revealed in the small truths that make up our lives.

Being is never harmed by the limited perspectives we experience. Being is not dependent on any particular way of sensing your self, nor even on the absence of a sense of self. Being is already resting within the endless opening and closing of your Heart, so you might as well enjoy the ride.

*the truth catches up with me
I am not enough
never have been
never will be
what relief to admit this finite container
can never contain infinity
what joy to find infinity
needs no container*

Please note: This free bonus is part two only of the book, *Living from the Heart*.
For more info or to purchase the book on various ebook stores: <http://endless-satsang.com/free>
