



Seeing Beyond the Illusion of a Separate Self

by Nirmala

[Advaita](#) and nondual teachings are about finding the Truth. This Truth is not a dogma that you

study; it is the Truth about life—the Truth about who you really are. This Truth is discovered, not learned. It is discovered through sincerely inquiring, Who am I? What you discover is that who you are has nothing to do with self-images or roles and everything to do with what you experience when you ask this question. What you discover is that who you think of yourself as is just that—a thought! And beyond that thought is a great Mystery—an experience of nothingness, which is your true nature.

Nothing Personal leads you to the experience of your true nature and helps you explore its depth. Through exposition, questions and dialogues, it brings you to a place of realization of the Truth: you are that spacious Awareness in which everything appears, including your thoughts and feelings. Your thoughts and feelings do not define you but merely appear within Consciousness along with everything else. This Consciousness is who you are.

Nothing Personal offers a gentle and persistent guide to seeing the underlying truth of your ultimate nature. In this concisely edited collection of satsang talks and dialogues, you are invited to honor the limitless love that is your true nature and to enjoy the sweet richness that is revealed when you give this Truth your undivided attention.

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More about the book:

From the introduction

Unlike most books, this one is not meant to add to your knowledge or understanding. It is about the Truth that cannot be spoken or written. Although the Truth cannot be contained in this or any other book, each word written here is intended to point you toward that Truth. Many of the words and ideas may seem paradoxical or contradictory because what they point to is larger than our conceptual frameworks. Many questions are asked, which are not answered anywhere in the book. Find out what the experience is like to ask yourself these questions, even if they leave you emptier of knowledge and understanding. In this emptying, you just may discover what you are looking for.

The Truth is revealed when we allow ourselves to not know, so I invite you to set aside all that you know for the time being and allow yourself to look with innocent eyes at what the words are attempting to unveil. Take the time to experience the unspoken truth in each section before moving on to the next. Resist the temptation to read these words with your mind, which is likely to rush right past the Truth. Allow the words to sink into your heart and reveal the truth of who you are.

From the foreword by Adyashanti, spiritual teacher and author of *Emptiness Dancing*:

“The beauty of this collection of Nirmala’s talks and dialogues is that it covers much of the spectrum of spiritual awakening, from the initial experience of one’s true nature to the practical challenges, which always call for a deeper seeing and deeper understanding of how spirit manifests as all of life and beyond. Within these talks and dialogues you, the reader, will find Nirmala to be a living invitation to look within. 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.”

Reviews of Nothing Personal:

“*Nothing Personal* opens a clearly lit portal to your whole Truth, which is ever-present fulfillment, resting joy, and a devoted love and wonder for every moment of your being. Nirmala’s guidance is gentle, compassionate, and wise beyond reason. It is clear that he has taken every life experience into the very heart of Awareness. I love this teaching. It is profoundly organized, practical, heart-full, humble, and most of all True! Who could ask for more?”

–Sundance Burke, Advaita spiritual teacher and author of *Free Spirit*

“*Nothing Personal: Seeing Beyond the Illusion of a Separate Self* 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 spiritual teacher and author of *Awake in the Heartland*

I consider this outstanding work one of the classics, along with *Power of Now* and *I Am That*. For anyone studying Advaita or just spirituality in general this book is a must-read. Nirmala draws the reader into a gentle form of self inquiry with rare skill. Put away your blasting caps, you are not going to war with the ego in this one (as if that ever worked for anyone.) Instead Nirmala advises us to "

notice and allow

", with the caveat that who we are is already doing just that every moment. Great discussions on the nature of desire and suffering. Also includes one-on-one conversations with spiritual seekers. Nirmala's wit, warmth, and wisdom will touch you deeply on every page.

-“tothetune” on Amazon.com

“Nirmala offers a variety of subtle spiritual practices for inquiring and seeing the truth about you in every moment and, most importantly, accepting it. First, you find the truth through inquiry, then you stay with it until you rest in it, then you fall deeply in love with it....Another beauty of this collection is that Nirmala does not attempt to reject anything that arises in consciousness by hiding out in the Absolute. As he says, accepting the whole truth means that nothing matters and everything matters: ‘The goal of spiritual life is not to transcend the world or be done with it but to bring the Absolute to the suffering of the world.’...Besides wisdom, you will find honesty and humor in these talks....This book points to that which we truly are—the already present and permanent source of joy and happiness, the Heart of Being.” –Dennis L. Trunk, editor *Third Millennium Gateway*

“As with most modern books on Advaita, this is a psychological rather than a metaphysical presentation, but it is full of sincere love, wisdom, and humour. It is highly practical and readable

with many original ways of looking at the situation in which the seeker finds him/herself. I highly recommend this book. A wonderful gift to the Advaita community.” –Dennis Waite, author *The Book of One*

“I love this book. Meeting us wherever we may be, Nirmala playfully engages us in an inward investigation to discover the true source of happiness. His message is spiritually profound but practical, incredibly wise but simple. In a down to earth, humble manner, Nimala reveals our false ideas with great understanding, humor and compassion. He invites us beyond the clutter of conditioned thoughts, emotions and habits, and points us to the boundless source of peace and love within.” –Paul Jozef, Non-Violent Communication Facilitator

“I just wanted to let you know how WONDERFUL your book, *Nothing Personal* is. I feel like I am sitting with you directly and receiving your words as my own understanding. It is pretty remarkable! I have had no teacher per se, and only recently began to realize what I am not. This book is an incredible deepening of this early awakening in me, and I love your sense of humor—you are hilarious. There is so much in there that I have one incredible awareness after another...It is like your words are constantly waking, waking, waking me up to Awareness, while also reminding me of my deep abiding delight and love for Mind. It is so nice to read something so beautiful that is not trying to be any-thing. This book speaks of things in ways that are so ‘gettable’ (now there is an interesting word) and also so profound. And it is fun, fun, fun to read.”

–Lisa Lee, facilitator of The Work of Byron Katie

Here is an Excerpt from *Nothing Personal*

What if even your strongest emotions aren’t personal? Is anything personal? What if this experience we are having as a body and mind is more like a radio that receives things rather than creates or generates them? You need a radio to play the songs that are passing through this room now, right? All this experience is floating around, and this radio called “you” is playing these songs called desire, fear, love, envy. Even resistance is just one more song called “I want to turn off the radio.” What if your internal experiences are not personal but more like something a musician recorded years ago that is being played now?

Even the love songs aren’t personal. Even the very dramatic, very sad, very happy, or very romantic ones aren’t personal. There is nothing wrong with them; they just aren’t yours. You can still pay attention to them, but there is no reason to get invested in trying to change them or get them to stay around. Every song on the radio eventually ends—even “Bye-Bye Miss American Pie,” which was 17 minutes long. It would go on and on, but eventually there would be another commercial.

A radio is a great metaphor because a radio isn't like a CD player, which you can program to play what you want it to play. What plays on the radio is not up to you. Sometimes, it is a happy song, sometimes it is a sad one, sometimes it is an inspiring one. The Mystery is so wise that it knows exactly what song to put on in this moment. It decides what song gets played, and once it has been played, you can't hang on to it. Just being present while it is being played is the best you can do. That is all you can do. Paradoxically, this recognition that everything that arises on this radio called "you" is impersonal makes it easier to pay attention to what is arising because, if it's not personal, there is no reason to hold back from it.

Another huge mystery is: What is aware of what's playing on this radio? Then, you can ask an even stranger question: Is there a boundary between what is aware of what's playing on the radio and what's playing on the radio? Is what is hearing the radio and experiencing all of the experiences actually separate from the experiences themselves? It turns out that the listener who is hearing these tunes is not separate from this Mystery. Rather, the songs are streaming forth out of the Mystery, and the listening is streaming forth out of the same Mystery. There is a huge ground, or Presence, in which everything happens. The surprise is that this ground is not a place of knowing but rather a place of open-eyed discovery. There is no knowing ahead of time what will be played; you just discover in the moment the next song comes on.

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