

**MEET**

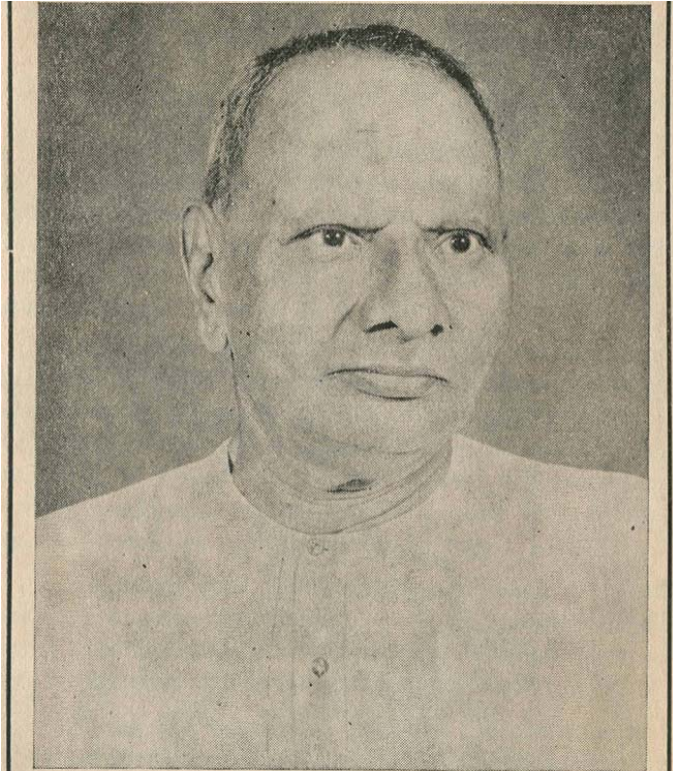
**THE**

**SAGE**

**SHRI NISARGDATTA**

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Shri Sadguru Nisargadatta Maharaj Amrit Mahotsav Samiti, BOMBAY-57



SHRI NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ

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**SAGE**

The occasion is the auspicious Birthday Celebrations of Shree Nisargadatta Maharaj. The lavishly illumined Laxmibaug Hall of Bombay is agog with bustling devotees of Shree Maharaj. A huge portrait profusely garlanded with fresh and colorful flowers on a specially decorated platform captures the gaze of all present.

At the corner of this bright, beautiful and decorated platform is seated Shree Nisargadatta Maharaj. He is clad with usual homely wear of a snow-

white dhotee, a yellowish khamees and a simple topi. The conventional trappings of (Sandalwood) paste marks and strings of conventional beads that usually go with other holy persons are conspicuous by their absence on his body.

His bright dark complexion, a full face, a broad forehead and in particular his large eyes pouring grace all around characteristic of an accomplished (Siddha Purusha) are the cynosure of his numerous devotees present.

Nearby are seated his respected Gurubandhus and his illustrious devotees like Shri V. S. Page, Shri Maurice Frydman etc. Following the speeches, praising the glory of Shri Maharaj, of a few illustrious invitees he has begun his discourse. His words full of divine wisdom thrill and instill peace into the hearts of his countless devotees. See how powerful and inspiring are the following words coming from his holy lips:

*" Today's celebrations are not in the glorification of any individual. This is an auspicious occasion for you and for me to glorify the unity of a devotee with his Sadguru. To name a particular day as being the Birthday of One who is not only eternally existent but eternal existence itself is, in the Spiritual parlance, incorrect. It is also wrong to personify a true devotee. As long as you conceive yourself to be an individual male or a female being you will not be the all-pervading, eternal and transcendental self. Go with the conviction that you are not the bodily self, that you are beyond births and deaths, that you are dynamic, being dynamism itself and are apparently experienced only as pure and simple awareness. Be free, proclaim saints, go on asserting within that Atma is not weak or devoid of power. Believe steadfastly with a simple belief that Atma is rich with its fullness. It is not possible to delve deep enough to reach the seed-the Gurubeej-the inner faith on Sadguru. Devotion to Guru reaches the Guru through devotion to the Self and the Sadguru's blessings emerge and flower through the Self and are consciously received externally by the devotee. Godhead is nothing but pure awareness of your being. The achievement of this fruit-this Godhead-is accomplished through unshakeable faith in the pure self. That what is called the Satswarup, the Self, is through this faith thoroughly comprehended. There should be conviction of this comprehension. The conviction implies unshakeability. That should be accomplished. There should be unflinching conviction of the Self being fixed, immobile. That what you conceive yourself to be is myth because you take yourself to be the bodily being. The incomprehensible on the surface of which the awareness of being is experienced is called the Sadguru. Call conviction only to that which does not budge, which is immobile. Parabrahma is fixed, immobile. The Self is fixed (in Parabrahma). The self is Parabrahma".*

Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj through whose holy lips gush forth these powerful words annihilating the encrustations of the individuality of his listeners rarely ever speaks of his worldly life. There is, according to him, no import to the happenings in the worldly life of a Saint. To speak of the Self while being rooted in the self remains the only mission left with the Saints and the audible message coming through the (inaudible) Self is commonly called the discourse of a Saint. It is therefore difficult to draw a graph of his worldly past life.

The worldly life of a Saint, though insignificant from his view-point, gives guidance and provides inspiration to his devotees. The devotees have,

therefore, to collect information about the past life of their Sadguru to inform their enquiring mind and in particular for their own good.

Shree Maharaja's Birthday was unknown for a long time. Devotees needed to discover it, since how could they, otherwise, celebrate it? To those who mustered courage to ask him about this, he said, "How to tell the date of birth when there is no memory of the birth? Why to talk of things that have not taken place!" Though this was true on the spiritual plane devotees needed to know the day when their Sadguru's bodily form took shape in this material world in order to embellish the exterior of their devotion.

After a long search this day could be ascertained. On the break of' the dawn of the auspicious full moon day of Chaitra month of the year 1897, popularly known as Hanuman Jayanti, Shree Maharaj took bodily form, A few details of his antecedents could also be collected from his near relations and close associates.

To write the biography of a Saint, as it is, is really a very difficult task. A devotee once asked Swami Vivekanand as to why he did not write a biography of his Sadguru. to which question he replied that it was impossible for puny words to do full justice to the magnitude of his Sadguru's life.

Being faced with the same difficulty an attempt is being made below to narrate, in short, the material past life of Shree Maharaj.

### **Childhood and Education:**

The sprawling district of Ratnagiri ~a mine of gems~ lies snugly hugged to the warm sea along its long coastline. This district has added luster to the Indian life by providing to it numerous human gems in all walks of life. Shree Maharaj was born in Bombay City and was brought up in a village named Kandalgaoon in the lovely countryside, 4 to 5 miles deep from Malwan a seaport to the south of this District. The hilly countryside here is extremely beautiful. It is ever green with mango, cashew and coconut trees. The exterior of the inhabitants of this district is seemingly rough and uncouth like the exterior of the local jack-fruit. but their interior is sweet like the inside of this fruit and sweet and luscious like the local mangoes.

In keeping with the local custom, being born as aforesaid on the auspicious birth anniversary day of Shri Maruti, Shree Maharaj was named Maruti. In later life he had the distinction of being the leading disciple of Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj.

Shree Maharaja's father Shivrampant Kambli and mother Parwatibai were both ardent devotees. Shri Shivrampant was, up to 1896, in the service of a merchant at Colaba in Bombay. At the first outbreak of the epidemic of plague in that year in Bombay, he left for his district and purchased some land at Kandalgaoon near his home town Revandi and eked out his livelihood. He was simple and obliging by nature. He had in his possession a number of traditional holy books which he read regularly and devoutly.

Shri Maharaj's parents observed very rigorously the traditional fasts and holy days. They made no distinction as between Shiva and Vishnu. His father loved to sing Bhajans, especially loudly as do the followers of Varkari system.

There was one Brahmin friend of Shri Shivram Pant. His name was Shri Vishnu Haribhau Gore. He tilled his land and owned also a coconut and beetle nut garden.

He had a mastery over astrology. Shivaram Pant often had long talks with him, especially on spiritual matters. Shree Maharaj regarded Shri Gore as a pious person. To him Shri Gore was the ideal in the virtues of honesty, courage, tenacity and hard work. He greatly respected him. The devotional life of his parents and the virtuous life of Shri Gore molded Shri Maharaj's childhood which became fertile *for* divine grace.

There are hardly any childhood memories available of Shri Maharaj. The first memory he has is of his being carried on the shoulders by his father one early morning on the slopes of a hill, when in front the Sun was brilliantly rising above the horizon. Shree Maharaj says this first and a very vivid memory he still carries very clearly till today.

Shree Maharaj had his elementary education up to Std. IV at Kandalgaon. While observing the village life he developed a liking for tending cattle, tilling land and gardening. He particularly liked taking household cattle for grazing far in the open. He spent happy time in the jungle with the young herdsmen of his age.

The mystery of nature always posed him with a problem. How was it that only a basketful of paddy sown gives maunds of yield? How, when there is nothing but soil in the field, abundant grains come out of it? How is it that mangoes come out of the tree? How sour mangoes when small turn out later to be sweet and luscious? Why the seed of a cashew fruit is outside the fruit when all the other fruits have their seeds inside them? These and such other mysterious questions tormented his young mind. Adult replies did not satisfy him. The mysterious' and wonderful play of nature enthralled his mind and provided him inspiration *for* love of God.

He was from the very beginning of an obliging nature. He immediately responded to a needy call. In times of distress he ran to help them put out fires, pull out a cattle *from* a well, etc. For this, he made no distinction as between a caste Hindu and a Harijan. If there was death in any household he would himself go out and render all assistance to its members. The life of poor Harijans in particular touched a sympathetic chord in his heart. He was distressed by their hard life.

How did poverty still exist when the world had long been in existence? When the villages were very old why were path ways leading to them so primitive and difficult? When all human beings were similar, why are we regarded high and the others low? Such questions tormented him. If the world existed before I was born, how was it that I did not know that it was

there? He brooded over such occult questions also.  
Journey to Bombay:

On the 14th night of Falgun month of the year 1915 Shivrampant quietly breathed his last. A few hours before, he had given pre-intimation to his dearest friend Shri Gore that he would leave the world that day.

The paternal love and security of *four* brothers and two sisters was no more. Agriculture was a poor means of livelihood in those days. The elder brother of Shree Maharaj left for Bombay in 1916 to eke out life.

Shree Maharaj also left for Bombay in 1918 to explore life there. He occasionally would go to Kandalgaon to look after the land there. He had endeared himself there to all with his obliging and friendly nature. Even in those olden days he had befriended many Harijans. He had at times even helped them drag carcasses. His pure mind did not even so much as think of inequality amongst men.

After intermittently being either at Bombay or Kandalgaon for 2 to 3 years Shree Maharaj permanently settled in Bombay in 1920. He joined a night school for a short while to acquire the rudiments of the English language. He worked for a couple of months as a clerk in the Princess Dock. The fetters of service inhibited his enterprising mind. He therefore left his job and entered business.

### **Success in business:**

Owing to his industrious and friendly nature he started getting stability in business. He even then stayed in Khetwadi. He married in 1924. His wife's nature befitted her name Sumatibai.

The field of his business slowly started enlarging. Shops, big and small, of tobacco, bidies, cutlery, readymade garments etc. were opened by him at Khetwadi, Grant Road and Bori Bunder. His technique was to acquire a place for a shop in a building under construction in a locality suitable for business by starting negotiations with the agent of the owner in advance. Thus his business flourished. There were 30 to 40 employees working under him.

### **Aspirant to Spiritual Realization :**

He was fully engaged in his expanding business. He was making good money, but he had not forgotten the Almighty. Devotion to God also deepened.

One of his friends in business, Shri Yashwantrao Baagkar by name, was a kind-hearted person and was a devotee of God. He and Shree Maharaj often had long talks on devotional matters. Shree Maharaj from the very beginning loved to read books on spiritualism. He liked the book "Nawnath Bhaktisar" in particular. In addition to reading books on spiritualism he also observed traditional fasts and performed other usual religious practices. He snatched time from his busy schedule to go to Bhuleshwer or Walkeshwer temple. In those days his mother stayed with him. Every morning he used to give her

flowers and reverently touched her feet. This to him was worship of God. He never forgot to give grass to cows. The cows that always used to have grass at his hands developed relationship with him. In the month of Shrawan he religiously used to go every morning to Bhuleshwar temple to offer leaves of Bel tree to God Shiv.

There was one Yogi by name Shree Athavale in the Girgaum area in those days. Shree Maharaj learnt Yogic exercises from him for a few months. Shree Baagkar used to go for Darshan of Shree Sadguru Siddharameshwar Maharaj and also attended his programs of devotional songs and spiritual lectures. He even received grace from Shree ~ Siddharameshwar Maharaj in the form of initiation. Thenceforth he pressed Maharaj to have Darshan of Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj. Shree Maharaj avoided it. He refused to believe that there could ever be Saints or Sadhus in a mushroom city like Bombay. He refused to touch, by his forehead, the feet of any human form.

When the importunities of Shree Baagkar failed he requested Shree Maharaj that, at least for his sake, Shree Maharaj should accompany him for a Darshan of Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj.

Willy-nilly Shree Maharaj accompanied Shree Baagkar. In those days Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj used to be at the residence of late Shri Krishnarao Pathare, Solicitor. The usual program of devotional prayers and spiritual discourses used to be held there. The day Shree Maharaj went there first Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj was having a discourse on a line from the book "Yogvashisth." "Look inward, Oh Lord I" was the theme of the day's discourse. Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj profoundly expounded the theme. The talk exalted renunciation. Shree Maharaj plainly told Shri Baagkar that the call was beyond him. He, however, at the requests of Shri Baagkar, went thrice in succession for the Darshan of Siddharameshwar Maharaj.

Shri Baagkar strongly desired that Shree Maharaj should receive initiation from Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj. He succeeded at last. Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj by disclosing one secret thing above him created confidence in him and initiated him by giving a 'Nama Mantra' and explained to him how to meditate. Within a few minutes Shree Maharaj experienced within him dazzling illumination of various colours and went into deep trance. Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj soon awakened him. Thus at the end of 1933 the stage of an Aspirant was over and he became a Sadhak.

### **Great hierarchy of Sadgurus :**

In the field of spiritualism the hierarchy of Sadgurus has a great significance. It is a fortune of a Sadhaka to have a long tradition of enlightened Sadgurus. The hierarchy of Sadgurus Shree Maharaj belonged to is well known as the Nath Sampradaya (School of Philosophy) which had a brilliant past. Shree Revannath, alias Shree Revan Siddha, was the first of

the famous Nav (nine) Nathas. From his one name Revan Siddha his Sampradaya is also known as the Siddha (accomplished) Sampradaya. In this Sampradaya a disciple is taught to have a direct experience of the Self.

After Shree Revannath, Shree MaruI Siddha, Shri Kad Siddha, Shree Guruling Jangam Maharaj of Nimbargi, Shree Bhausabeb Maharaj of Umadi and the last Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj belonged to the line of the great Sadgurus of Shree Maharaj.

Shree Bhausabeb Maharaj built a shrine of Shree Gurulinga Jangam Maharaj at Inchgeri (Dist. Bijapur) and widely spread spiritual knowledge there. Shree Amburao Maharaj, Shree Siddharmeshwar Maharaj, the world-famous philosopher Gurudeo Ranade Maharaj Shree **Girimalleshwar** Maharaj and other great disciples of the Sampradaya spread spiritual knowledge far and wide. Shree Bhausabeb Maharaj used first to initiate his disciples only on Mondays and Thursdays. It was a Saturday when Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj first met Shree Bhausabeb Maharaj. Shree Bhausabeb Maharaj knew the potential of Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj and gladly broke his practice and gave him initiation on a Saturday. From then, he started giving initiation even on Saturday. Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj spread spiritual knowledge between the years 1924 and 1936 with great effect in Bombay and round about Sholapur.

### **Unflinching faith on Sadguru:**

The grace of Sadguru completely changed the course of Shree Maharaj's life. He dedicated his worldly life with his Self to the lotus-feet of his Sadguru at his very first prostration before him. At the very first meeting his mind introverted and settled on the feet of his Sadguru. In the words of Shree Maharaj he was bound in wedlock.

Whatever his Sadguru said or was saying was law unto him. So unflinching was his faith on his Sadguru that every word coming from his Sadguru's lips was finality to him. He cared for nothing else-beyond that. He got everyone of his employees initiated by his Sadguru.

Whenever Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj was in Bombay the usual programmes of chorus singing of devotional songs and of spiritual discourses were held with great éclat.

He was an accomplished 'Yogi, a renunciation (Vairagya) incarnate. Though in the midst of royal splendor, he was detached from everything as a lotus leaf is in water. There was quite a number of rich and Learned persons amongst his thousands of disciples. He, however, gave spiritual knowledge freely and bountifully to all his disciples irrespective of their social status as was very kind-hearted yet fearless and outspoken.

He hardly received any education. He studied only up to elementary second standard. He had, however, such spiritual height that while giving a spiritual discourse he shone like a blazing sun. He expressed spiritual knowledge in such a simple language in his talks that listeners flocked to him in great

numbers. He spoke with such conviction based on Self-experience that many learned persons sat mute and bumble at his feet.

The description given by Swami Ramdas in his 'Dasbodh' befitted him completely. His talks were virtual boons of divine grace to his disciples. In one of his talks he says:

*"God is nothing else than the devotee. Give up the idea that there is a devotee and the God. It is a myth that some one else will come and do something for you. Whatever is, is of your own making. Nothing extraneous will give you Godhood. Maya (Doubt) has the power to dislodge or shake you from your conviction, but it has no power to give you Godhood Your will has given you the shape you experience. Be God or whatever you like; you have only to will so. Name what you like and you have it. What you acquire comes to being. How will people call you God if you yourself do not believe in your Godhood? When you will realize that you were committing a 'sin' or a blunder in behaving like a worldly being then Godhood, will dawn on you. When you feel so, then take it, that You are acquiring Godhood. Why, you have actually acquired it, nay, you will then experience that you needed no acquisition of it because it was there eternally within you already. As a man naturally feels ashamed to wear the garments of a woman, so a man who has acquired Godhood will feel ashamed of the material life. You must always feel that ultimate Reality is ever free. You should be ashamed of going round as a human being. Why should you need different objects for the gratification of different senses of the body when you are convinced that you are not the body but pure consciousness (Brahma) itself. Beware and examine critically the thoughts coming to your mind. Do it as a daily routine. Go on observing, how far, what you took yourself to be before, is undergoing a change. 'Observe and compare the change in your attitude to life before and after you met the Sadguru - what you consider yourself to be before and what you consider yourself to be now. See what feelings evoked Pleasure in the mind before and what feelings do so now. See what attributes we give to our life, that is, what form and meaning we now give it. Acquisition and dispossession take place involuntarily according as what form and quality your consciousness takes shape of. Our mind .intelligence, Chitta and Ahankar put together go to form our right which we try to exercise with reference to our form, inner consciousness and the Place or the destination where, we aim to go. By focusing your inner gaze directly on your conceived outward form and inner cognition, you realize the Self at first hand and the conviction of such realization is called the steadfast Self-Realization".*

### **Ideal Seeker (Sadhak) :**

The powerful teaching of Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj carrying conviction with it revolutionized Shree Maharaja's life. His zest for family life and business waned. He practiced meditation and sang devotional songs with sincerity. Thereafter, he indulged more and more in spiritual thinking and to him, practicing meditations as taught by his Sadguru and singing devotional songs with sincerity remained the only pursuits of his life. The vow given to him by his Sadguru was his only guiding star in the future course of his life. Implicit obedience, without raising even a shade of doubt, of his Sadguru's word became the key-note of his life. If his Sadguru bade him give up a thing, he unhesitatingly and instantly did so. He derived great



happiness in the service of his Sadguru and carrying out his orders. He once accompanied his Sadguru to his home town, Patri. He did not miss, during those days, even a single traditional function held at Inchgeri Bagewadi and Siddhagiri (Kolhapur). In 1935 he had gone to the home town of his friend Shri Baagkar. He gave twelve discourses there on spiritual books. On hearing them Shri Baagkar was greatly pleased and cited in approbation the mythological story of a Parijatak flower tree which, though in front of the doors of Satyabhama, actually shed flowers in front of the house of Rukmini,- both the wives of Lord Krishna. Occult books difficult of understanding earlier became now simple and plain to him. He was fast gaining spiritual height. At every step he experienced the grace of his Sadguru.

Being occupied with the daily chores of business, he practiced meditation mostly at night. He experienced strange and colorful divine lights in his meditation. He also experienced various divine forms of God and Saints. He experienced beautiful sights of places and lands never seen before. Thus his spiritual life was blooming fast.

### **The loss of Sadguru:**

Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj dropped his body a little before the Divali festival in the year 1936 on the Ekadashi day of the later half of the month of Ashwin. The material form which pleased the eyes of his devotees was no more. It was like a heaven-fall to them. Shree Maharaj extremely grieved his Sadguru's loss whose absence he keenly experienced every *now* and then. Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj laid his material body in Bombay. His beautiful marble shrine is built on the Banaganga Walkeshwar cremation ground. Shree Maharaj used to visit the place very often. A shrine is built also at Baagewadi.

Shree Maharaj used to remember the powerful words of Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj. In his last days he used to say, "Disciples as such there are many, but is there one who is ready to renounce material life completely for the sake of his Sadguru's word?" The wound caused by the arrow of this question tormented his mind. He often used to be completely distracted. His business remained neglected. The idea of complete renunciation of material life was taking root in his mind. He yearned for Self-realization.

### **A wandering Sanyasin:**

The days were of Divali celebrations in the year 1937. There was gaiety all around. Shree Maharaj, however, was calm towards everything. Tears often gushed in his eyes at the memory of his Sadguru and his grace. His Sadguru's last words tormented him more and more. It became almost impossible for him to carry on his business.

He took a final decision to renounce material life completely while the Divali celebrations were in full swing. Without informing his aged mother,

wife and children and literally throwing his business to the winds, he left Bombay and took the path to Pandharpur.

At Pandharpur he gave up his costly clothes. put on a simple khamees and only with two small pieces of loin cloth and a coarse woolen covering he began the course of penniless wandering. Saffron colour signifies renunciation. His outer wear became in its true sense, therefore, in tune with his inner mind which had turned saffron-coloured. The memory of his Sadguru was his only thought and the only support. Blessed be he, who, just for the sake of a word from his Sadguru, kicked off his wealth and completely renounced his material family life.

He coursed and walked his way from Pandharpur to Ganagapur. From there he turned to the South. While wandering in the State of Madras he reached Rameshwar. Having loved to walk long distances he wandered only on foot. Since communication through the language of the South was impossible, he relied only on mute gesticulations.

Through the grace of his Sadguru, food for subsistence was never a problem to him. Some one or the other with reverence for Sadhus chanced to meet him at lunch time and offer him food with great respect. Some even used to offer him a ticket for his further journey or fare for it but he politely declined it. Sometimes along with other wandering Sadhus he was implicated by the Police in some trouble. But by the grace of his Sadguru, he used to be honourably let off on each occasion. The undaunted faith in his Sadguru had made him fearless.

He turned back from Rameshwar in the South. Wandering through Karnatak he entered Maharashtra. Accidentally a brother disciple met him at Sholapur. Out of love, he gave Shree Maharaj a fine photograph of his Sadguru, a copy of Dasbodh, a piece of saffron cloth with its ends tied together to be slung on his shoulders to serve as a receptacle, camphor and scented sticks. Then he started for the north. Traversing through Madhya Pradesh he reached Agra. Then he set out for Delhi via Mathura-Brindaban. Then he made up his mind to go to the Himalayas, 'visit holy phces and do penance there.

### **Mystic experiences:**

In the course of his wanderings, he had many mystic Divine experiences. That deepened his faith in his Sadguru Exhausted and tired of long walks when sometimes he caressed his hot bare feet he saw on them the divine Picture of his Sadguru. That instantly relieved him, of his exhaustion and refreshed him. This direct experience of the grace of his Sadguru filled his heart with emotion and filled his eyes with tears of love for him.

In his wanderings he everyday used to do one Yogic exercise known as Tratak. This required fixing a long gaze on the disc of the Sun. He used to do this so long that ultimately the burning Sun used to cool down and looked like a piece of ice. He, thereafter, gave up this practice.

Once he set off for his next halt. He walked on till noontime. He looked around and afar but there was no trace of a human habitation; long barren fields lay stretched everywhere. He became very much hungry. In that barren land he did not know where and how to go further. His Sadguru, however, was, as always, uppermost in his mind. Once again he looked back. He now noticed a small habitation. He went there out of curiosity; It was a small, old house. When he approached it, a man inside received him with reverence and fully fed him. After his meal Shree Maharaj set off for his next journey. He was wondering how the house came to be noticed and how at once he also got food. While so wandering and when he had not walked even fifty paces, he casually looked back in the direction of that house. And Oh! There was no trace of the house which he had left only a few moments before. No human being could also be seen anywhere. All around lay, as before, long stretches of barren fields. The intensity of the emotional upsurge of this moving experience of his Sadguru's grace could well be imagined.

### **Return:**

Shree Maharaj reached Delhi by the Mathura Brindawan Road. He intended to go to the Himalayas for a pilgrimage and to spend the rest of his life there only in penance. Dedication to his Sadguru was, according to him, to be complete-by his body, speech and mind.

Shree Maharaj wanted on his next journey a small pot for drinking water. He had however, no money for it. While walking through the streets of Delhi .he accidentally met a brother disciple. The full story of Shree Maharaj enhanced his respect for him but he could not approve of his plan to go to the Himalayas. He said to Shree Maharaj, "Blessed are you as *you* have stood the test of a true devotee by complete renunciation of *your* worldly life. But does attainment of divine life call for going to the Himalayas? The entire hierarchy of our great Sadgurus, as *you* will see, has, by its own example, exemplified the unity of the worldly and the divine life. The teachings of the Dasbodh also support this. How can *you* Absolve yourself from your moral responsibility for the maintenance of your wife and children? No, that won't do. Do go back to Bombay. I shall make all arrangements for your journey back to Bombay. By the grace of Sadguru, I am sure, while leading a material life *you* will also acquire fruition of the spiritual life

Shree Maharaj could not rebut his revered brother Disciple's arguments. In deference to his advice, he returned to Bombay. That was a great fortune of his family members and his future devotees. It is the Sadguru's will, it is true, and that ultimately prevails.

### **Life Divine and Material:**

On his return to Bombay after an absence of many months he took stock of his business. It was completely upset. He could retain only his present bidi - shop. His old zest for business having waned he was content with running only his present small shop. Since that was just enough for the sustenance of his family he devoted minimum time to it and gave as much time as possible for his spiritual Pursuits. Beyond the time that was absolutely

necessary to keep his family and business going, he was always engaged in meditation, singing devotional songs contemplation and Similar other spiritual matters. He did not do any Conscious efforts for these spiritual pursuits (Sadhana) because; whatever Sadhana was going on was involuntary taking place at the beckoning of the call within. Without going out anywhere else he made use of the mezzanine floor of his tenement itself for his spiritual practices. Having traversed long distances over a protracted period, independently and without any means his self -abnegating' nature (Vairagya) had come to stay. He followed a strict and regulated daily regime. He spoke but a few words. His devotion to his Sadguru was so singular that he never thought of going out to temples or meeting any Saints.

He regularly spent hours in meditation. While in meditation he intuitively received replies to his spiritual doubts from within and, felt reassured. He read spiritual books like 'Dasbodh', 'Sadachar' by Shree Shankaracharya and in particular studied 'yogavashistha and Eknatha's Bhagwat. He was lost in getting at the root of their meaning. He also carefully read works like 'Shreemat Bhagawat Geeta', 'Upanishads', 'Dnyaneshwari', 'Amrutanubhava' etc.

He loved singing devotional songs from the early days. While singing these songs in front of a portrait he used to become oblivious of the surroundings, turn his back to the portrait and was lost in him self and lay still for a long time in the ecstasy of the luminous divine light in front of his eyes. He literally experienced chewing a paan himself when he sang a line meaning a devotee offering a paan to the Lord. He got all the spiritual experiences explained in the traditional song of his Sampradaya (school of thought) sung everyday in the afternoon. Owing to the rousing of serpent power (Kundalini) he gained very high spiritual experiences and was lost in their ecstasy for long periods.

Being engrossed in these matters his health remained neglected and it broke down. He felt very weak. Through the pleadings of his relatives, medical treatment was started. The doctor's diagnosis of T. B. frightened all. Shree Maharaj, however, remained unmoved. "Yes, the doctor has pronounced it to be T. B.," said Shree Maharaj, but what will it do when the tube inside is full of my Sadguru's vow? Without taking much of a medical treatment he started doing regular physical exercises.

He started doing Sashtang Namaskars and Baithakas and increased their number up to 500 a day. He started doing physical exercises with wooden clubs (Mudgals) also. His health started improving and within a few months, he became quite fit.

A few years later his health broke down again and he became weak. He passed blood 3 to 4 times through his urine. Doctor frightened everyone again by suspecting cancer and advised taking six X-ray photos immediately. For the sake of his relatives, again, he agreed to take a few medicines but refused X - ray photos. "If you really have faith in me", he said to them, give up the idea of taking photographs of the disease". At these resolute words of his, they kept mum. For their sake Shree Maharaj agreed to a minor course of medicines. Through sheer faith on his Sadguru he was cured. His

health improved within 2 to 3 weeks.

### **As a Siddha (Accomplished):**

Shree Maharaja's spiritual practices were unfolding themselves involuntarily through sheer faith on his Sadguru. In course of time his Sadhana culminated into his ripening as a perfect Siddha - a Seer through direct Self - realization. The primal reality of the Self got confirmed by its direct revelation through the Self. Delving deep into the mystic Self, he experienced the inner blinding flame which illumines the universe. He saw the eye which perceives through the mortal eye. By the grace of his Sadguru he acquired through Self - realization the immortal fruit of Reality in the form of Jeevanmukti - final liberation - as a culminating point of his Sadhana. The routine of his daily life outwardly continued to be as before. He was doing nothing though he seemed doing everything. Even after fulfilling his duties in his shop and towards his family he snatched hours for offering prayers and singing devotional songs to his Sadguru and for loud spiritual thinking with his dear brother disciple.

From 1941 onwards he came in a close contact with his brother disciple Shree Bhainath Maharaj. Everyday they usually used to go to Girgaum Chaupati for a walk after the shop hours. They were engrossed for hours together in their discussion, the subject matter of which was nothing else but spiritualism. In those days of the Second World war there used to be a black out every night. Sometimes even curfew hours were on, due to communal riots and house-fires. Close by, country bombs used to explode on the open streets. Braving such tense atmosphere and unmindful of the rain or the cold winds, these two Gurubandhus were engrossed for hours together in spiritual discussions on the Chaupati sands or the Chaupati Band stand or sitting on the footsteps of a closed shop or standing at the corner of N. Powell. It was not uncommon that when they reached home it was two or three hours past midnight. Their daily routine mundane duties, however, did not suffer on that account.

Shree Maharaj was much spirited and clear-cut in his talks. Shree Bhainath Maharaj had, therefore, usually to play the role of a listener. Commenting on his calm habits Shree Maharaj once said to him "You are indeed very cool like Lord Vishnu. Look at me! I am like the fiery Lord Rudra

These long and subtle talks on spiritual matters helped both. This nightly spiritual fire was continuously on for 25 years.

Self-realization had made Shree Maharaj cool towards the ups and downs, the happiness and misery in his life. The loss of a dear daughter, devoted wife and a revered mother during the years 1942 to 48 and the severe loss in his business did not ruffle him. On the contrary, these shocks hardened his vairagya. Owing to lack of attention, his landed property in the Konkan was literally thrown to the winds. Braving great miseries one after other, he once coolly exclaimed "Fortunate shall I be, if miseries do befall me."

Experiencing his spiritual height and powers his well wishers and

devotees started gathering around him. To avoid distraction he used to avoid them. If some one persisted he cut him short by giving him a short shrift. How long, however, a sweetly smelling flower can keep off the bees? They shall hover round it whatever the obstacles. The well-wishers and the devotees were, likewise, irresistibly attracted towards him. They used to get their spiritual doubts and difficulties cleared by him. Mundane matters were a taboo with him. He is against using spiritual Siddhis for performing miracles. Most of his time of the day being spent in his shop, the spiritual discussions used to be in front of his shop. Some aspirant or other was always seen standing in front of his shop. To avoid encumbrances he never used to invite others to him or to go to them. His devotion to his Sadguru, as said earlier, was so singular that he never so much even as crossed any other Sadhu.

In those days there was in Bombay one famous Aвалия(Sufi) by name Tikku Baba. One of his chelas (devotees) often used to visit Shree Maharaj and tell him many things about Tikku Baba's greatness and invited Shree Maharaj to visit him. Even Tikku Baba sent him messages to come and see him. Shree Maharaj did not yield. Before dropping his body Tikku Baba sent him a message, "I am dropping my mortal body, do come and receive my spiritual powers". Without the slightest wavering of his mind Shree Maharaj conveyed his message to him, "My contract has already been finalized once and for all time."

### **On the seat of Sadguru**

Many received guidance through the discussions held in front of his shop. Some of his devotees expressed a desire that he initiate them. Shree Maharaj was reluctant to play the role of a Sadguru, he used to direct them to one accomplished Gurubandhu of his. Some of his devotees however, insisted on initiation from him only. He did not yield to their importunities. Whenever the question of giving a Nama Mantra (initiation) arose he quietened them by a cross question whether the Saints like Saibaba, Upasanibaba. Satam Maharaj or the like ever gave Nama Mantra. All the same, they could not give up their insistence and preferred waiting patiently for years to get the Nama Mantra from Shree Maharaj. Although in order to avoid encumbrances he was avoiding them, he could not disobey the dictum from his Sadguru much longer. His Sadguru himself strongly willed that Shree Maharaj bless his devotees by initiating them into the field of spiritualism by giving them Nama Mantra and spread true knowledge in the world. He yielded and started, in deference to the will of his Sadguru, to initiate from 1951 onwards true aspirants by giving them Nama Mantra. Thus, after all, he assumed the role of a Sadguru.

### **Ashram Regime:**

After he started giving Nama Mantra, devotees began to gather at his residence for their Sadhana. - The present mezzanine floor was half its size then. He got it complete full-sized. More aspirants could, therefore, make use of it for their spiritual practices. A lovely portrait of Shree Siddharameshwar Maharaj was installed in the place which has turned itself into a regular Ashram now.

The love and care the devotees get from Shree Maharaj defy description. One truly gets the experience of Saint Dnyaneshwara's couplet from one of his Abhangas meaning:

At the meeting of the Saints today my happiness is  
at its superlative  
Mind is disinclined to meet, father  
Mother dear ones and other relatives.  
Blessed be the devotees endowed with such divine love!

Shree Maharaj likes plain and disciplined life. All the programs held in the Ashram are characterized by their regularity and cleanliness. That is largely due to the willing cooperation and efforts on the part of his only son Shri Chittaranjan. Daughter-in-law Mayadevi and younger daughter Kumari Suprabha. The eldest daughter nee Sulochana is now Shreemati Mangala Hate, being married to Shri M. D. Hate, an old devotee of Shree Maharaj. Since his retirement in 1966 from active business Shree Maharaj's son looks after his shop. All the inmates in the Ashram being very kind by nature all the incoming devotees are warmly welcomed. One also hears here the twitter of the two young grandchildren of Shree Maharaj.

The day in the Ashram begins with a Kakad Arti followed from 8 a. m. onwards by the portrait worship of Sadguru, Pothee-reading and simultaneous group meditation for an hour for those present. This is immediately followed by the singing of the morning Bhajan, Arati, and Prasad distribution. This concludes by 9.30 a. m. Shree Maharaj impresses on the minds of his devotees the necessity of increasing the practice of deep meditation and doing Sadguru Bhajan with all devotion. This perhaps is the only place in the whole city of Bombay where one can practice Dhyanyoga very regularly. The singularity of this holy place is that, despite the constant din of the traffic on the road below, the mind of a Sadhak, within a few minutes, turns inwards and losing bodily consciousness, enjoys, through divine experiences, inner bliss.

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Daily in the evening discussions on spiritual matters are held for those who are interested in them. One can hear masterly analysis of what is 'Knowledge' (Dnyana) and what is 'Bhakti' (Devotion). In course of his talk he, off and on, keeps on smoking bidies. The aroma of costly scented sticks (Agarbatti) constantly lingers on. At 7 p. m. begins the evening Bhajan. This is followed for an hour or an hour and a half by a very inspiring and powerful discourse on Dnyana and Bhakti by Shree Maharaj. The day concludes with the singing of devotional songs, Arati and Prasad distribution.

On holidays, the number of devotees attending being large, the evening program of singing devotional songs and Shree Maharaj's discourse is held in the commodious hall of Shree Bhainath Maharaj. On the holy days like the Birthdays and anniversaries of Sadgurus in the tradition, GuruPurnima, Deepavali, Dev Deepavali etc., celebrations are held in specially rented big halls with great enthusiasm. On these occasions Shree Maharaj himself loudly sings devotional songs and dances to the tune. It is a lovely scene to witness. Shree Maharaj does not at all like the idea of celebrating his own birthday, but he had to acquiesce in the importunities of his devotees.

In the recent past the number of disciples of Shree Maharaj in the city of Bombay and in other places has considerably increased. He undertakes tours four or five times a year to visit, along with some disciples, holy places, like Bagewadi, Inchgeri, Siddhagiri which are the birth places of Sadgurus in the Sampradaya. He also visits, though rarely, the places of disciples who stay out of Bombay. On such occasions, the disciples not only get opportunities to express their devotion for their Sadguru through physical service but also get their divine life refreshed by added vigor and vitality. Shree Maharaj reveals, through his daily discourses and talks, the essence of Reality through his own conviction with exceptional vigor and clarity. Knowledge flows through his talks everyday for hours on end. It pours freely like rain and is addressed to all who are present.

Narrow distinctions of male and female, high and low, caste and creed, isms or schools make no sense here. His sublime and Saintly looks pour peace and love equally on all. Like the pure and refreshingly cool waters of the Ganges, his powerful language gives peace to the spiritually thirsty according to their needs. His audience includes seekers from different walks of life. Professors, pleaders, judges, high executives, political and social leaders often visit the Ashram to seek spiritual guidance from him. Seekers of Truth from the West like Shri Maurice Frydman often visit him for discussion and spiritual guidance. Since he has no expectations from others, he is, as in his day-to-day practical life, exceptionally plain and un-inhibitive in his spiritual teachings as well. Worldly matters have no room with him. Shree Maharaj is against making use of spiritual powers (Siddhis) to seek worldly ends though his faithful devotees do experience his powers in their daily life.

The language used by Shree Maharaj has its own singularity. Always deep-rooted in the Supreme reality, he reveals at ease, to the surprise and ecstasy of his listeners the glow of their spiritual self through the words spontaneously flowing out of his holy lips giving a spiritual twist to their conventional meaning. New aspirants do not easily grasp the inner meaning of the language, peculiarly his own. One realizes the value of his spiritual language only after listening to a few of his discourses through the inner silence with rapt attention. One is, then, involuntarily drawn towards him to listen to him. His power of exposition is rare indeed.

Himself seated firmly in the absolute non-dualism he peels out through his peculiar spiritual language the truth of direct Self-realization. By correctly listening to him, his devoted listeners, then, enjoy the spiritual ecstasy of Self-realization blossoming through their own Self and are immensely pleased with their rare fortune.

The discourses or talks of Shree Nisargadatta Maharaj are now available in book-form. Though averse to publicity, therefore, he is well-known to many earnest aspirants of Truth. Three or four compendiums of his talks have been published. They are immensely useful to seekers of Truth. Some of his lyrical poetry (Abhangas) has also been published. In the worldly sense his 71st Birth Anniversary Day was celebrated by his devotees in 1967 with great éclat. On this auspicious day his devotees published one commemoration book. They took an opportunity, through this book of expressing their Self-gratification for being fortunate in getting a life-time



chance of rendering what is, in spiritual parlance, called a service to the Sadguru. Even in this book are included valuable articles explaining the teachings of Shree Maharaj.

The message of Shree Nisargadatta Maharaj borne out from his self-experience appears at the very outset of this article. They are not mere hollow words. He speaks out what he himself experiences within. Countless obeisance be at his holy feet! The great Saint Shree Nisargadatta Maharaj personifies a continuous flow of ecstatic bliss of the Self His saintly life itself is an auspicious Jiving message providing inspiration and guidance to all.

The glory of Saints can be described only by Saints. To try to do so is beyond the words of mortals. It is better, therefore, to conclude here the puerile attempt made above.