

Siddha Marg



शिवोऽहम्

When the mind has come to a deep experience of Śivo'ham—"I am Śiva"—that is when you have really understood what meditation is.

In that space there is nothing to become. It is a space of joy. You're happy being who you are. You don't have to do anything to please anybody else, or anything to please yourself. You just remain content, still.

MAHĀMANDALESHWAR SWAMI NITYĀNANDA

The purpose of Siddha Marg is to communicate the teachings of Mahāmandaleshwar Swami Nityānanda as he shares with us the knowledge and practices of the sanātan dharma (universal law). This year, he has invited everyone to spend some time studying the seventh chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, as expounded by Swami Maheshwarānanda Giriji in Nectar of Discourses. This issue features excerpts from talks Gurudev gave this February at Shanti Mandir in Walden, New York, in which he offered his commentary on the first three verses of the seventh chapter.

Become Attached to the Divine



With great respect and love I'd like to welcome everyone to *satsaṅg*. It's been about six months since we've gathered here. As we chanted, it felt as if it were just a week since we've been together.

Of course, for us, wherever we travel, we have *satsaṅg* on Sunday. The venue changes, the audience changes, but *satsaṅg* continues.

Quickly my mind traveled through all the places we've been in these six months. We had *satsaṅg* in Houston, Texas, where a meeting with some children was organized for about 4 pm. That's probably a bad time to be with ten-year-olds who've had a morning of playing and swimming, and then a craft afternoon. All of a sudden there I am, and they're thinking, "What are we going to do with a swami? All we want to do is play!"

I found the only way to talk to them was to be playful. I began by asking them, "Is it possible for one to be good?"

A ten-year-old up front raised his hand. He said, "It's difficult."

Become Attached to the Divine (continued)

That stayed with me for quite a few months. I just remembered it again now. I thought, “If a ten-year-old feels it’s difficult to be good, then an adult must find it is even more difficult.” Because a ten-year-old has less baggage. We are older and supposedly wiser, and something within us—whether it is from our parents or the intelligence within us—reminds us: “Don’t!”

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa, “What is it that impels an individual to perform wrong action, or sin?”

I think it’s a question we can all ask ourselves as we go about doing what we do.

We all are good. We’ve been good. We try to be good. Yet sometimes something within us thinks, “What if...” Of course, life goes on and things happen. And later when that bad or wrong action bears fruit, we say, “God, why me?” We forget in that moment that something happened, that we did something.

Parents and also grandparents talk about the difficulties their child is facing. They say, “The child was fine through his teens. And then one day *this* happened.” They want some miraculous, magical thing to eradicate the problem.

When we face a situation, we have a choice to do the right thing or the wrong thing. In that moment we don’t weigh the long-term consequences of the action we will perform. We forget to think about what it will do to us as we go through life, and all the various people who will be affected by it. We simply think of the immediate benefit we expect to get. Only later, when the action bears fruit, we wonder, “Why did God do this to me?”

We come to satsaṅg with the understanding “May I always be in good company.” And satsaṅg is not limited to Sunday

mornings, 10:00 to 12:00. It is twenty-four hours a day. Because we have the satsaṅg of our mind. The mind is with us always. And it is that mind that impels us.

Lord Kṛṣṇa gives a very simple answer. He says, “It is desire and anger born of passion that propel one to perform the actions one performs.”

So you think, “Okay. I simply have to conquer desire, conquer anger.”

But everything in life is driven by these two things. It is driven by desire, it is driven by anger. So how do you become free of desire? How do you become free of anger?

A modern person would say, “If I don’t have desire, if I don’t have passion, what am I going to do?”

Only when we have become free of desire do we understand that there is a great energy that rules life, and we are simply its instrument.

In the *Gītā*, Arjuna pauses for a moment on the battlefield and says to Kṛṣṇa, “All these people are my teachers, my relatives, my cousins, my friends. If I go through with this war, I might kill them. I might have the sin, the karma, of having done this.”

But Kṛṣṇa reminds him that it is his duty to do what is right. He has been chosen to stand against the Kauravas, who have done wrong. It’s a long story. You have to read the entire *Mahābhārata* to understand right and wrong, good and bad. Then you begin to realize that in all our lives, a war goes on within our own mind. The battlefield is within you.

In the first verse of the seventh chapter, Kṛṣṇa says, “Listen, O Arjuna, without doubt to that which I will tell you. If you want to be attached, become attached to the divine.

“It is desire and anger born of passion that propel one to perform the actions one performs.”

Become Attached to the Divine (continued)

Yoke yourself to the divine. If you want to take refuge in something, take refuge in the divine.”

We all think, “What should I do in life?”

Kṛṣṇa simply says, “Attach yourself to the divine. Live under its shelter, and live without doubt.”

As we look at our lives, we see that what stops us from performing the right action, or from doing what needs to be done, are the questions “Will I? Can I? Is it possible?”

We began this year in Magod with two words in Hindi: *sambhav hai*. “It’s possible.”

All the young children loved it. Because in youth you think, “Yes, I can do it! It’s possible.” As we get older we wonder, “Is it really possible?” But if we remind ourselves of this mantra—“it’s possible”—we simply have to put forth the effort and remember, as Kṛṣṇa says, to live under the refuge of the divine. We remember it is not the limited individual person who is doing it, but I am doing it under the auspices, the umbrella, of that which is greater and divine.



“Attach yourself to the divine. Live under its shelter, and live without doubt.”



Have the Direct Experience

“You must have a direct experience of Truth.”

In the second verse, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, “Understand and have the direct experience of that knowledge knowing which nothing else remains to be known.” A sage lives in that experience of knowing.

Yesterday evening the chant of *Śrī Rām* took place here as I sat with the notes for this talk. In that moment, the experience Lord Kṛṣṇa talks about made total sense. In one ear was the *bhakti* of *Śrī Rām* and the vision of everybody dancing with joy and love. At the same time, the mind was contemplating the oneness of everything. But as soon as the chant ended, I thought, “How do you explain the experience of divinity, of oneness, to someone who’s not listening to the chant?” Because then we have the experience of duality: we think there is ‘I’ and there is the divinity.

Kṛṣṇa explains, “You must have a direct experience of Truth.”

Swami Maheshwarānanda puts it in simple terms. He says you know there is fire in wood, but this is indirect knowledge. You cannot use the fire to cook a meal or dissipate the cold because it is hidden inside the wood. Through a process—which in the olden days involved rubbing two pieces of wood—you spark fire so you can feel its heat and cook with it.

In the same way, he says, we have indirect knowledge of the oneness of Truth. Just as we know there’s fire in wood, we know there is divinity within everything, but it is not seen or experienced by us. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa says, “O Arjuna, become a yogi, meditate.”

I know tonight is the Super Bowl. I was told the most important person is the quarterback. The whole game depends on the quarterback. Yet the quarterback cannot think to himself, “I am the game.” He needs all the other players to play with him. For the game to be successful, all must become one.

Of course, in that moment they may not think, “I’m having an experience of the divine Self.” All they see is the ball. Yet somewhere within themselves is the experience of what the sages call *ānanda*, the experience of the Self.

Those of us who don’t understand football try to understand what so many millions of people are excited about. Those who understand say, “Wow! Did you see that pass?” And those of us who don’t understand say, “What pass? There was a pass?”

It is the same when the sage says, “Did you experience Truth?” You wonder, “What Truth?”

As I read this verse yesterday, I was reminded of Baba. He loved talking about the Self. In my childhood days with him, I would think, “Self? How do I grasp the Self? How do I understand it?”

Over the years, I’ve come to realize that until we actually drop into that space within ourselves and allow the external world to disappear, the experience of the Self remains an abstract idea. We must become quiet, become still, and go to a place within where, as the second chapter of the *Gītā* says, “Water doesn’t wet it, fire doesn’t burn it.” The sages tell us words do not reach that space.

Have the Direct Experience (continued)

I am reminded of a story about Mullah Nasruddin. Nasruddin is sitting next to an astronomer and he asks the man, “Do you know me?”

The astronomer says, “No.”

The Mullah asks, “What do you do?”

The man says, “I study the stars in the sky. I’m an astronomer.”

Nasruddin says, “When you don’t know me, who is sitting next to you, how can you know the stars, which are so far away?”

Baba would sometimes laugh and say, “The Truth that dwells within us is so close. We don’t know that Truth, but we claim to know everything else.”



Until we actually drop into that space within ourselves and allow the external world to disappear, the experience of the Self remains an abstract idea.



Only the Rare One Knows

The third verse of the seventh chapter says, “Among thousands of people, hardly anyone strives to attain me. And among those yogis who strive, only the rare one knows my real nature.” Whenever I share this in satsaṅg, some wise person comes afterwards and says, “If only a rare one knows and I don’t know if I am that rare one, why should I make the effort?”

Especially in our times today, people take a weekend seminar or visit somebody for a few moments, and they think, “Got it!”

But when you read Rumi or different sages, they say, “I got it that I ‘don’t got it.’ I got it that I don’t know it.”

“Among thousands of people, hardly anyone strives to attain me.”

Rather than getting worried because Kṛṣṇa says it’s difficult, you should be concerned about putting forth more effort to stay aware, to allow yourself to have this experience.

As Nārada is traveling upon the earth, he meets an ascetic. In the summer months this ascetic surrounds himself with fire, and in the winter months he stands in water up to his neck. In the monsoon he sits under the heavy downpour.

Nārada goes up to him and says, “I am the divine sage Nārada. I’ve come from the Lord Himself. Is there anything you wish to convey to the Lord?”

The ascetic says, “Why don’t you ask the Lord when I will see Him, when I will have His *darśan*?”

Nārada writes this down on his iPad. On his way to the Lord, he comes across a beautiful ashram with a banyan tree, a mango tree, fig trees, and many other trees. There’s a temple to the Lord, a building for satsaṅg, a kitchen, a

cowshed, a guest house, a ghat for bathing in the River Ganga, and many facilities.

The head swami is a great scholar, a virtuous person who remains in the experience of the Self and teaches this knowledge to others. Nārada goes up to him and says, “I am sage Nārada.”

The swami welcomes him.

Nārada says, “Is there any message you want me to convey to the Lord?”

The swami says, “Just ask Him, when will I have His *darśan*, when will I see Him?”

Nārada says, “Okay.”

When Nārada reaches Vaikuṇṭha, he tells the Lord, “I have been here, I have been there. Along the way, I met an ascetic and I stayed at the ashram of a swami. Both want to know when they will have Your *darśan*, when they will see You.”

The Lord says, “Tell the ascetic he will have to go through similar penances for four more births and then in the last birth he will have my *darśan*. Tell the swami he’ll have to take as many births as there are leaves on the biggest fig tree in his ashram. Each of those births must be spent in devotion, practicing *saṁnyama*. Only in the last birth will he see me.”

Nārada goes first to the ascetic because he thinks the ascetic will be happy at this news. He says, “The Lord said only four more births living as you are now, and you will have His vision in the fourth birth.”

Only the Rare One Knows (continued)

**As we continue doing
sādhana, as we continue
our practice, the
outcome of darśan
will happen.**

The ascetic cries, “What?! What I’m doing now is not enough? Four more births? Who wants to know your Lord anyway?” He packs up and goes off to enjoy a worldly life.

Now Nārada is worried. If the ascetic was so upset about four births, the swami will be even more worked up. But he thinks, “I promised him a reply from the Lord. I must go and at least convey the message.”

When Nārada arrives, the swami is in a joyous state, teaching and sharing his wisdom. He stops to welcome Nārada.

Nārada says, “The Lord said however many leaves are on the biggest fig tree of your ashram is how many births you have to take. All those births must be spent in devotion and service to the Lord, and then possibly in your last birth you will have His darśan.”

The swami says, “Wonderful! At least the Lord has promised that at the end of all this I will have His darśan. So what better way to spend my life other than in devotion and in service to Him?”

As soon as the swami reacts thus to Nārada’s reply, the Lord appears in front of him.

Nārada is standing there and he says, “You lied to me! You said as many leaves as are on the fig tree is how many births he must take before he has Your darśan. Yet I haven’t even left after giving him Your message, and You are already here!”

The Lord says, “O Nārada, I was up in Vaikuṇṭha listening to the ascetic and his temper tantrum over four births, and then listening to the swami, who is content because he will spend all his lives in devotion, in service. When I saw such purity I couldn’t resist coming here instantly.”

This story takes a long time to understand with the logical mind. What we have to understand is that as we continue

doing *sādhana*, as we continue our practice, the outcome of darśan will happen.

We had an all-day chant yesterday. From 10 am to 5 pm we chanted the mantra *Oṃ Namaḥ Śivāya*. From 5 to 6 pm we had an ecstatic *Śrī Rām* chant. It was also wonderful to see the stillness that the snow brings.

I took a short walk up the hill after lunch, and for a moment imagined yogis living in the Himalayas in the snow, with no heat or the many things we worry about today. I thought, “What must they do to keep themselves warm?” In today’s time fewer yogis live up in the Himalayas, but a hundred years ago more were there, keeping each other company.

I see all of you are worried. “Why am I sitting here? Why do I have to be out on this cold winter day?” Etcetera, etcetera. That effort is exactly what is going to bear fruit.

Thousands went for Bhagavān Nityānanda’s darśan. Thousands, as we know, came and heard Baba Muktaṇanda. Many understood the philosophy. But as Swami Chinmāyānanda says, that “imperceptible desire,” that vanity, which we don’t even know we have, is what stops us from having the direct experience. Though I think it isn’t really unknown to us.

You could say all our desires are fighting to get through the same door. If you don’t know what that is, go a local suburban train in Mumbai. There are people getting in and there are people getting out—at the same time! So many egos, so many minds, so many individuals are fighting to get in and out of that one narrow opening. In the same way, you can imagine that each of us has an opening to the divine that is like the eye of a needle—so many desires, thoughts, ideas, vanities, and unknown perceptions are fighting to get through.

Only the Rare One Knows (continued)

The Internet is usually good in the morning because most people go to work. You can quickly go to any site you want. But come 7 pm, 8 pm, 9 pm, it takes longer to get to the same site. The simple reason is that many thousands of people on the same network are trying to do the same thing. The same gigabytes are now being shared by many thousands, not just a few.

So we want to be a morning seeker, not an evening seeker. I hope you understand what I mean. The morning seeker gets there faster; the evening seeker has to fight to get online. He quits, opens, boots, reboots.

If you call the service desk of a computer company, they say, “Shut down.”

You say, “I have already done that.”

“Restart.”

“I’ve already done that, too.”

“Do this.”

“I’ve already done that.”

They can’t help you any further because they’re looking at the same book you’re looking at.

Similarly, you think, “The scriptures, the sages, all tell us the same thing.” And you have the same response: “I’ve done that.”

Maheshwarānandaji says, “On the road to self-improvement, various types of hurdles and impediments come up to confront those people who strive, hurdles that block their progress and sometimes even push them back. It is necessary to fight such obstacles like a brave warrior and to keep striving courageously, never giving up. Only then does a person succeed by God’s grace.”

When we hear this, we get a little bit disheartened. But then we realize that all we have to do is keep putting forth effort. That effort has to be filled with joy and with constant experiences of devotion.

When you woke up this morning, you had so many reasons to tell yourself, “I’m not going to go to Shanti Mandir.” It snowed yesterday. You’re on the verge of a cold. It might be icy. All these worries, yet you braved it and brought yourself.

As you go home, allow yourself to feel all that you have experienced. On days when obstacles arise, remind yourself of the experience you are having right now.

Difficult as it may seem, the sages tell us it is only difficult because we make it difficult. It is not actually that difficult. We listen to untruth more than we listen to Truth. And when Truth comes in front of us we say, “No, no, no. I know better.”

So stop for a moment and ponder what is true. Contemplate deeply. This is all the sages ask of us. In this way, hopefully we become the rare ones who know the true nature of the divinity that dwells within us.

This is what the seventh chapter talks about. It’s only one chapter, but Swamiji’s book, *Nectar of Discourses*, has more than 700 pages. If you want to understand Vedānta in a simple, lucid form, this is a wonderful book to study. Swamiji has many wonderful stories. You will laugh at them and think, “Ha-ha! How stupid of them!” But if you hold up a mirror, you realize, “Ha-ha! How silly of me!”

We’ll continue to study it throughout the year. Hopefully as we go on, we will understand what Kṛṣṇa wishes to share with us and slowly begin—as the sages tell us—to experience Consciousness in everything.



We want to be a morning seeker, not an evening seeker.

G L O S S A R Y

ānanda

bliss

Arjunaa warrior, hero of the *Bhagavad Gītā****Bhagavad Gītā***

Hindu scripture

bhakti

devotion

Chinmāyānanda, Swami

[1916-1993] Guru and scholar of Vedānta

darśan

vision of the divine, experienced in the presence of a holy being

dharma

righteous law

Kauravascousins and enemies of Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gītā***Kṛṣṇa**Hindu deity, Guru of Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gītā***Magod**

village in Gujarat, India, where Shanti Mandir is located

MahābhārataHindu scripture that contains the
*Bhagavad Gītā***Maheshwarānanda, Swami**author of *Nectar of Discourses****Oṃ Namaḥ Śivāya***

mantra; literally, “I bow to the divine within”

Rumi, Jalalu’d-Din

[1139-1173] Sufi poet-saint

sādhana

spiritual practices

sambhav hai

it is possible

saṁyama

concentration

sanātan

universal, eternal

satsaṅg

in the company of a knower of the Truth (saint)

Śrī Rām

chant to Lord Rāma, incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu

Vaikuṇṭha

the abode of Lord Viṣṇu

Vedānta

philosophy based on the Vedas

