



ॐ नमः शिवाय

We use the mantra Om̐ Namaḥ Śivāya, which means “Salutations to Śiva, the divinity that dwells within.”

We must come to understand that the one who is repeating Om̐ Namaḥ Śivāya is repeating our true name.

Even to think “I am Śiva” is duality because there is “I am” and there is “Śiva.” The mantra being repeated, the repeater of the mantra, and the deity of the mantra must all become one.

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). One of the ways Gurudev shares knowledge is by answering seekers’ questions. This issue features questions and answers selected from satsaṅgs held over the past two decades.

The Great Energy of the Universe

QUESTION:

What is kuṇḍalinī?

GURUDEV:

There is energy in this universe, right? That much we all believe. Energy is what makes it all happen.

Sound travels—that’s energy. Electricity travels—that’s energy. Wind is energy. Fire is energy. Everything is energy.

The same energy that exists outside also dwells within our body in a condensed form. When it dwells within us, the term is kuṇḍalinī.

It is said that it is coiled three and a half times. You can think of it as like a snake, coiled three and a half times at the base of the spine. The word coil in Sanskrit is kuṇḍala. Because it is feminine, it becomes kuṇḍalinī.

In Sanskrit, there are different names depending on how something is used. For example, water has more than a hundred and fifty. We call it rain water or ocean water or river water. It’s still water, but depending on the form, Sanskrit has a different term.

The Great Energy of the Universe (continued)

In meditation, your kuṇḍalinī becomes active. And your kuṇḍalinī is not different from the great energy that exists in this universe.

QUESTION:

Kuṇḍalinī moves in me quite a bit. Fear comes up, and I'm wanting a little advice about how to stay with it.

GURUDEV:

A good hatha yoga teacher would help. Hatha yoga does basically the same thing as kuṇḍalinī yoga. It helps to remove blocks. When you meditate after doing hatha yoga, it is easier to release and let go.

Fear comes up because of the unknown. We don't know what is going to happen. So accept that you don't know. Besides, knowing would not help, either.

QUESTION:

When I meditate, kuṇḍalinī moves in my body and it's actually fairly pleasant. I can get very distracted by it. Should I try to stop the movements, which then activates my mind, or should I let them happen?

GURUDEV:

There are various blocks within the body. As the kuṇḍalinī moves, these blocks have to be removed. That's what causes the movements. The best thing is to just allow those movements to take place.

Around Baba, we saw a lot of movements. It happened to people you'd never think would be able to move in that way. When you met them alone or talked to them later,

sometimes they were not even aware of all the things that had happened to them.

I remember in Melbourne in 1978, an Australian man was speaking, I think, Japanese or some other language. If you asked him afterwards, "What did you say?" he didn't know. He didn't understand what he was saying.

The best is to forget you are having movements. Just allow yourself to become immersed. Movements will happen, and then some years later you'll miss those movements. This happens sometimes. People say, "I had wonderful visions. I had wonderful movements. But it doesn't happen to me now." They are worried. They wonder if the kuṇḍalinī is not working in them anymore.

We had a joke around Baba. Someone comes up to Baba and says, "I have no more movements."

Baba says, "That means you're all clear. You have no more blocks."

Of course, the person is elated to hear this. It means he's very pure compared with the rest of the crowd.

But suppose Baba says instead, "That means you are so choked up that there's no space for the kuṇḍalinī to move."

Now the person is worried.

So, enjoy your movements. Let them happen. I would say there's a stillness within that movement, as well. That stillness, that energy, is what you want to feel and experience.

The same energy that exists outside also dwells within our body in a condensed form.

The Great Energy of the Universe (continued)

QUESTION:

Are there any dangers with kuṇḍalinī awakening? It seems to be an overwhelming experience.

GURUDEV:

I think overwhelming is probably the right word. It is about release, or letting go, and there may be a small percentage of people whom it makes truly crazy.

But, as Baba said, the śakti is wise. If you allow yourself to surrender to the process and have faith, the śakti will guide you in the right way. Life then becomes full, complete. As such, there are no dangers.

Danger arises when people mix kuṇḍalinī, drugs, and other things, to experiment. If you do that, you're playing with fire. You are doing something that is not natural. That can become dangerous.

Many of the people who do go over the edge are those who have already been on the edge. To flush out that tendency, the kuṇḍalinī may push them totally over. Then they can rebuild themselves anew. The mind becomes stronger.

When I was about eight or nine years old, an American man came to Ganeshpuri. He was a little bit funny in the mind. Baba instructed him, "Don't meditate. Just do mantra repetition."

So we, the little kids, were given the job of sitting in a line along the back wall, and he had the job of walking back and forth, chanting Śrī Rām Jai Rām. He would chant, and we would chant. Sometimes we thought it was a punishment for us because we had to sit there for one or two hours doing this with him. He needed the chanting just to calm down.

QUESTION:

There are a lot of teachings about cakras, and many include the seventh. I was wondering if you could talk about that.

GURUDEV:

In our teachings, we are taught only about six cakras.

What you refer to as the seventh is considered the crown cakra, or sahasrāra, the thousand-petaled lotus. It is said that it is already open. It is already free of impressions, of saṃskāras. It is where the union of female and male takes place within the body.

The kuṇḍalinī must pierce through and open the six cakras. These six carry all the various impressions, and they travel with us in our subtle body as we go from body to body after death.



If you allow yourself to surrender to the process and have faith, the śakti will guide you in the right way.

Use the Brain to Do Better Things

QUESTION:

I feel locked into habitual experience in thought and action. What produces the shift towards spontaneity?

GURUDEV:

Most human beings operate from fear. However, when there is some understanding within, you realize, “What is the use of fear? It does nothing except limit me. What is to happen will happen anyway. So let me just live life and enjoy.”

The Sufis use the example of how animals live. Animals don’t worry about tomorrow, about what to do or what will happen. They just live life in the moment and enjoy.

Ram Das teaches, “Be here now.”

This means living life in the moment, keeping the mind present. If you can train the mind to be in the moment and enjoy, then spontaneity can be realized. It is a process to be worked on.

QUESTION:

When you were talking before, you said to get rid of useless thoughts. But then you said, “Use your mind, use your brain.” Can you explain that? Use your brain but not the useless thoughts?

GURUDEV:

I think you answered your own question.

Everybody thinks. There is no one who doesn’t think. A dog thinks, too. I’m sure a horse thinks.

I was saying that we all have a brain, and now science is finding that the less we use our brain, the more it dies. And the more it dies, the greater the chances of all these various sicknesses. So we want to use the brain to do better things.

We grew up with respect for our elders. We had fear of our elders. So out of love and respect for our elders, we used our brain to do good things. We at least attempted to do good deeds. However, the children of today don’t have that fear of their elders. So they just do anything. And that filters down through society.

What we want is, as the *Vedas* say, “O my mind, have noble thoughts.”

For example, you think, “I want to repeat the mantra.” But you can’t sit for twenty-four hours a day and repeat *Om Namaḥ Śivāya*, *Om Namaḥ Śivāya*, *Om Namaḥ Śivāya*. There are other things that have to take place. However, now thanks to the iPod and CD, you can have the mantra playing in the background, with the volume set at around 10. You can still hear it, and at the same time, you can go about doing whatever needs to be done.

**What is the use of fear?
It does nothing except
limit me. What is to
happen will happen
anyway.**

Use the Brain to Do Better Things (continued)

You've heard me talk about people who watch thriller movies and then say their sleep that night is disturbed. Who asked them to watch that movie? Who asked them to scare themselves? They don't need to do that.

You can read something uplifting before you go to bed. Then you sleep well. In the morning, you wake up feeling good. And you do good things.

Ultimately, you aim for cessation of thought. But until you get to the full cessation of thought, do wise things.

This can be a constant struggle. It's difficult to be good. But we all have to make the effort to be good.

QUESTION:

I work with many people who have dementia, and I worry I'll become demented and forget my mantra. If that happens, will I still be okay as long as I don't have thoughts?

GURUDEV:

I think while you are still free of dementia—and of all the conditions that can come with aging—you can work really hard so every part of your body becomes filled with the mantra.

Baba often said that every cell, every pore, of the body should become filled with the mantra. So in anticipation of possible dementia, you practice that now.

I've read over the years that using more parts of the brain—whether it's through learning a language or doing different things—is associated with keeping the brain alive. If you use less of the brain, it is more likely that the brain becomes dead. So you have to find things you can do, including things you

may never have done before, to keep those parts of the brain alive. Also, today many people are not aware of the effect food and other aspects of their lifestyle have on the aging process.

So chant!

QUESTION:

Is it most auspicious to chant the *Guru Gītā* in the morning? I'm not sure if it's okay to chant it in the evening.

GURUDEV:

It depends upon your lifestyle and your work schedule. If your schedule allows you to do it in the morning, that is the best time.

When you chant in a group, it takes forty to forty-five minutes. But if you do it on your own, you can do it in twenty minutes. So it doesn't take that long.

I have seen over the years that the best time for any practice is early morning. No other time is quite like 4 a.m. to 6:00 or 6:30 a.m. There's something special about nature at that time.

Once the sun has risen, the vehicles have started moving and everybody is going. It's hard to say, "Now I'm going to put in my earplugs and try to sit quietly." It's not quite the same. By then nature also has fully blossomed.

It is all a matter of adjustment. If it is easier for you, you can do your practice when you come back from work. Wash up. Take that hour, hour and a half, or two hours to practice. Then go to sleep.

Until you get to the full cessation of thought, do wise things.

Use the Brain to Do Better Things (continued)

QUESTION:

When you read the translation of the *Guru Gītā*, there's some pretty weird stuff about sitting on different things, facing different directions. Are we meant to take it literally?

GURUDEV:

Yes, the seating directions and so on do have literal meanings. But you need to be very committed, very intent on doing it, if you want to see results.

For example, the *Guru Gītā* says facing north is for peace, and facing west is for wealth. So you sit and say to yourself, "I am sitting on this *āsana*, facing north to acquire peace." As with everything in life, intensity must be there. If you just sit there with the book, facing north, not really into it, then nothing much may happen.

The ritualistic part of the *Vedas* is filled with these kinds of practices: the direction to face, the deity to please, the mantras to use. The Brahmin priests can look at someone's astrological chart and prescribe what that individual can do to please the relevant deity.

The way I look at it, there is the one energy of God, but different subdivisions of that energy perform various functions to enable the universe to work. The deities are different energies, performing these different jobs.

You need to be very committed, very intent on doing it, if you want to see results.



Untie the Boat

QUESTION:

I am familiar with all the attachments I've got. It's not easy to pull away from some of them. I keep seeking new attachments in order to get to a new thrill.

GURUDEV:

I think we always look for a thrill. Especially in our society today, we look for the thrill outside ourselves.

What we want to do eventually is come to the realization that pleasure comes from the Self, not from the objects of enjoyment.

If all pleasure comes from the Self, we can ask, "Why does the Self become engaged in external objects of enjoyment? What need is there to indulge in sense pleasures?"

The Shaivite scriptures tell us, "The Self is perfect and satisfied in itself and has no need to indulge in sense pleasures, yet out of its own free will, it does enjoy the senses." This indulgence does not diminish or defile the Self. On the contrary, it enriches its experience all the more.

An example that is used in Shaivism is of a beautiful woman putting on ornaments. The woman is already beautiful, so the ornaments reflect her beauty. And in turn, they beautify her even more.

Of course, in this example, the ornaments are separate from the woman. So her enjoyment is dependent on the external ornaments. In the case of the Self, however, the ornaments—the enjoyable objects—are manifestations of the Self. The Self is perfectly independent in its enjoyment of them.

This is the sport of the Self. The enjoyment of the world is seen as the free activity of the Self.

This is expressed in one of the *Śiva Sūtras* that Baba often quoted: *Lokānandah samādhi sukham*. "The bliss of the world is the bliss of *samādhi*."

I'm sure when you first hear this, you ask yourself, "How can external enjoyment be the same as *samādhi*, or immersion within?"

It can be the same because that joy—or thrill, as you said—doesn't come from the external object. It comes from within you.

QUESTION:

How can one find peace? How can the mind become immersed in divinity? Is there a technique?

GURUDEV:

All the things we did yesterday and today, and will do tomorrow and over the weekend, are techniques. We chant. We meditate. We keep good company. We read good things. We discard that which is useless.

As a seeker, the first thing to clarify within yourself is what is real and useful, and worth keeping.

Untie the Boat (continued)

As a seeker, the first thing to clarify within yourself is what is real and useful, and worth keeping. And tell *adios* to whatever is not worth keeping.

Often people say, “I am letting go.” But they haven’t actually let go. One hand has let go, but the other hand is still holding it. They think, “I’m not so sure if I’m ready to be free of it.” In true letting go, it’s done. So be it.

There are many techniques for finding peace. But the point is not to get caught in the techniques. They must bear fruit. They must lead to an outcome.

Sometimes you meet somebody who is proud he has been on the path for X amount of years. But then you ask, “How far have you gone on your journey?”

Just like our friend Mullah Nasruddin.

Nasruddin and his four friends took a rowboat to an island. After they finish their party on the island, they get back in their boat and start rowing for home. By now it’s the middle of the night. They are drunk, and they are rowing.

The sun rises. Nasruddin and his friends find that they’re still on the island. They forgot one thing: to untie the boat.

We do the same in life sometimes. We row and put forth great effort, but we go nowhere. Because of our ego, our attachment, and so many things, we are tied.

The very first thing is to free yourself. Then row. You will arrive at your destination.



Until you get to the full cessation of thought, do wise things.

G L O S S A R Y

āsana

yogic posture, or the mat on which one sits

cakra

energy center in the subtle body

Guru Gītā

commentary on the Guru

kunḍalinī

spiritual energy dormant within all humans,
can be awakened by the Guru

Om Namaḥ Śivāya

mantra; literally, “I bow to the divine”

sahasrāra

the crown chakra (energy center)

śakti

the creative energy of the universe; the
awakened spiritual energy

samādhi

union with the Absolute

samskāra

latent impression

satsaṅg

in the company of the Truth

Shaivism

philosophy based on the idea that all is
Consciousness

Śiva Sūtras

9th c. text of Kashmir Shaivism

Vedas

ancient Hindu scriptures

