

# Siddha Marg



## ध्यान

*Through dhyāna, meditation, you allow yourself to become more subtle. As the kuṇḍalinī energy moves through you, you get rid of whatever you don't need.*

*Then meditation doesn't just happen at a given time, it happens constantly. As you go about your daily actions, you are recharged.*

*This is a very high yoga. Once it catches you, it never lets you go. Even if you forget grace, grace never forgets you. It will always be following you.*

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.*

## Stay Focused

### QUESTION:

**For a person wishful of attaining the greatest good, what would be the most efficient use of his time around the Guru?**

### GURUDEV:

I have to think about that. For one, I would say to stay focused on why you have come to be with the Guru. And build upon that.

When you have a lot of friends, and you're around the people you know, sometimes the mind gets distracted by what others suggest you should do with your time.

You have to look within yourself. Listen to what is taking place in satsaṅg, and then ponder, "What do I want to do so I can get the most good out of my time in satsaṅg?"

Baba would say that the mind has to be clear within itself about why it is here. And I think, through that clarity and focus, we obtain that which we want to obtain.

### QUESTION:

**My addictions are reasonably benign, but chai is one of them. I know we need to get back to the Self, but the objects are so alluring. This is the stage where I'm stuck.**

## Stay Focused (continued)

### GURUDEV:

That's why we didn't send you for that cup of chai. Between here and the chai are a lot of obstacles.

I think it's true for everyone that until you arrive at the Self, you encounter all these obstacles.

It's like driving down the freeway. Every few miles there is an exit. If a seeker doesn't become aware, he will take every exit along the way. He'll never make it from Adelaide to Melbourne. That's what happens in life, too.

Sometimes I hear, "Oh, so-and-so hasn't been around for a while."

Later you ask that person, "Where have you been?"

"Oh, I got busy with life."

Each and every individual gets drawn to the objects of his pleasure.

In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, Lord Yama tells Nāciketa, "There are two choices in front of every individual: that which is pleasurable and that which gives the highest good."

What is pleasurable is determined by the individual. As soon as the chai goes on your tongue, you say, "Ahh!" But once you refine your tongue, not all chais are "ahh." Some chais are "pffff." Your tongue has been refined, so it understands the difference between a good cup of chai and a bitter cup of chai, and everything else in between.

I find that most people haven't refined their sense of taste, their sense of smell, their sense of sight, or their sense of hearing. I think, as a seeker, even if you haven't gotten free of the object yet, you can at least refine your senses so you know what objects are best.

For example, this morning's chai was not pleasurable for me, so I just had a little bit. Normally I have a cup and a half, but I had only half a cup. Now the question is, was it the milk? Was it the tea leaves? If you brew it too much, it becomes bitter. There are many factors that a refined tongue considers when determining what is pleasurable.

In today's society, we want shortcuts. Our mothers and grandmothers made chutney on a stone. If you take that chutney made on a stone and you take chutney made in a microwave, they don't compare. But if you've only had microwaved chutney, and you've never had stone-ground chutney, you won't know the difference.

Last night we had a whole tray of desserts. Someone who was looking them over said, "That one doesn't attract me. And that one doesn't attract me, either." So he only took one.

I said, "Why didn't you take that one?"

He said, "Just by looking at it, I knew I didn't want it."

I said, "That's wonderful. At least you have in your own mind decided what is pleasurable."

Otherwise it's like a story Baba used to tell. Mullah Nasruddin arrives in New Delhi from Turkey, and buys a kilo of nice red-looking things. He sits down by a tree to eat them. After he's had a couple of bites, he finds they are quite hot. But he keeps eating.

A local person walks by and sees him with that kilo of stuff and says, "Those are chilies. You put a little bit in vegetables or dal or whatever you are cooking. You don't eat them by themselves."

Nasruddin says, "I realize this is not something to be eaten by itself. But because I have bought it, now I'm eating it."

**"There are two choices in front of every individual: that which is pleasurable and that which gives the highest good."**

## Stay Focused (continued)

Baba would laugh and say, “This is what all of us do.”

You have acquired an object, and now that object is no longer giving you pleasure. It's only burning your mouth. Your eyes are watering. Your nose is running. You are in terrible pain. But since you have already acquired it, you're going to make sure you get pleasure out of it.

The wise person realizes, “It's not giving me the pleasure I imagined it would.”

The discrimination needed is to let go when you realize it's not giving you pleasure. And if your mind is again drawn to that object, remind it of the moment you had that realization. Replay the experience and constantly remind yourself.

In this way, you learn that it is just a game with your own mind. It's not a game with anybody else.

Sometimes when we go shopping and we don't buy anything, I say, “Oh, we've come home rich.”

Somebody asks, “Why?”

I say, “Because we didn't spend any money.”

I enjoy sense pleasures. The sages don't tell us not to have pleasure. They say have pleasure, but don't be attached to it.

For example, I tell people to feel free to have a cup of chai in the morning. Or have orange juice or whatever they like. Have it if and when you feel like it. It shouldn't be that as soon as you jump out of bed, your mind thinks, “I need chai or I'll get a headache!” Or “Give me a cigarette or I can't go to the toilet!” Or “I need coffee, otherwise...” If it's like that, then you are no longer having the pleasure, it is enjoying you.

### QUESTION:

**I hear that I have to focus. What am I supposed to focus on?**

### GURUDEV:

I was told yesterday that there was a game between Mexico and Brazil. The person said, “Guess who won?” The answer was Brazil.

Now, you can ask why one team wins and the other loses.

Each player has to do one thing: stay focused on the ball. He can't listen to the applause of the crowds. He can't get lost in anything else. He must think of one thing: the ball. The moment he thinks of something else, even if the ball comes straight to him, he won't see it because his focus is not there.

The first practice we teach is to sit. If one cannot even sit, how can one focus?

When you sit for meditation, you withdraw all your senses. This is *pratyāhāra*. Instead of following all the thoughts that are running outside, you bring your focus within. This takes time to learn.



**Instead of following all the thoughts that are running outside, you bring your focus within.**

# The Hundredth Sheep

## QUESTION:

**We love painting, and we're conscientious about doing our job. But no matter how hard we work, it is harder and harder to get jobs. Will you please tell me what we're doing wrong?**

## GURUDEV:

Sometimes it seems as if destiny doesn't favor us. Many people get worked up about this.

Yesterday someone said to me, "I sometimes think I'd like to just sit in one place, study and read, and not go anywhere."

I said, "Yes, the world can be quite selfish."

Each one wants to have the best for himself, but also the cheapest. You can't have both. You can't have the best and the cheapest. When you have the best, it has value. When you have the cheapest, it is what it is.

In our times today, I find good people are not always liked or welcomed. Many people don't know what is good. They just want to go where the masses go.

Often as I travel through airports, I see two sets of escalators. A large group of people goes to one set, and the other set is empty. It gets maybe two or three people. Everybody sees it, but they think the crowd is going to the other escalator so that must be where they should go. It's the same with the immigration officers and at the check-in counter.

I do the opposite. I look to see where it is empty, where nobody is going. Of course, I first read the sign to make sure it's okay to go there.

I would say it's a sheep mentality. One sheep goes that way, two sheep go that way, five sheep go that way—so the hundredth sheep also goes that way. Only a single sheep ventures over to the other side and stands by itself and wonders why nobody is coming along.

My belief is that we must constantly put forth the effort to create our best. At least some people in the crowd will appreciate and value that which is good.

For example, you can make beans in two ways. You can soak dry beans for twenty-four or thirty-six hours and then cook them. I tell our cook to change the water every six hours because the oxygen gets used up. Or you can buy a can of beans, throw them in the microwave, and they're done. Maybe you put out salt and pepper and say, "Add it to your taste." Somebody who doesn't know the difference will think, "Wow."

So I think you just continue doing the good work. In its own time, your work will bear fruit.

As you go to sleep every night, tell God, "I'm doing my best." Think to yourself, "I know I've been good." What is most important is that you get a good night's rest, without any worries about something you might have done wrong. I think that is worth a lot.

**As you go to sleep every night, tell God, "I'm doing my best."**

## The Hundredth Sheep (continued)

### QUESTION:

**Do you think that either the Christian or the Islamic religion will ever overcome the level of intolerance they have today toward those who are different?**

### GURUDEV:

I don't think the animosity has as much to do with the religion as it has to do with the people.

People who actually practice the teachings they have been given don't have anything to fight about. Nevertheless, people fight in the name of religion. This has always been so.

I was in a small village in India about five years ago. After we finished our satsaṅg, they told me, "If we go now, we will be in time for the evening āratī."

As we arrived, I stopped at a high point that overlooked the temple and courtyard. I saw how many people had gathered for the āratī. Those with fresh clothes were near where the priest was doing the service. Others were standing outside the temple. And some were sitting under the tree in the courtyard. So many people from the village had come just for those few moments. They had all come together in the name of God.

As I stood there, I realized that these kinds of places were created to bring people together.

If you study the teachings of different religions, you will find that all the teachings are basically the same. No religions teach people to fight. They teach us to be at peace with each other.

**No religions teach people to fight. They teach us to be at peace with each other.**





# Inner Freedom

## QUESTION:

**For me, freedom has been to express myself, be the person I want to be, go where I want to go, do the things I want to do. I'd like to know what your experience of freedom is.**

## GURUDEV:

I think freedom from our whole thought process and from catering to the mind is the first step toward inner freedom. Not being driven by a cup of coffee or by an object, or by a want or a need, is a great freedom.

I often use the example of people who smoke. They can begin by becoming aware, "I am not enjoying smoking; smoking is enjoying me."

Yoga teaches us not to be a slave of the mind. Instead, let the mind be your slave.

Often in life we act as if, as they say, the grass is greener on the other side. We think to ourselves, "If only *that* was in my life." Or if only...whatever it is we imagine we want. Most of life is spent in that pursuit, and we never enjoy that which is right in front of us. The mind is always looking across the fence.

Yoga teaches about inner freedom. You become aware that you must become free from the shackles, walls, and fences you've built within.

You mentioned freedom to express yourself. The *Gita Gītā* says, "Speech has to be truthful, beneficial, and pleasurable."

That means that when each one of us speaks, it has to be the truth. It doesn't mean that you don't care how the other person feels because, after all, you're speaking the truth. Kṛṣṇa says, "No, it has to be beneficial." When the person hears whatever you're saying that is the truth, he shouldn't feel disturbed by it. He should feel, "What I heard will benefit me."

It should also be pleasing to the ear. It should make that person smile, and think, "Oh, yes, that's right."

Often people who follow the so-called path of righteous truth think it doesn't matter what the other person feels or thinks, or how he reacts. They think, "I'm free to express myself, so I'm going to tell him or her the truth." That's not really freedom. They're just passing their pain or their suffering or their torture on to the other person.

Whatever you say—even in the name of freedom—you still have to look at the other person and make sure that it's beneficial, uplifting, and pleasing to that individual.

This applies not just to speech, but to the activities you do.

When you go to any great sage and sit in his presence, have *darśan*, and listen to his knowledge, you may wonder, "What is it that I experience? What is it that I feel?" If you think about it, you feel uplifted in that presence. In his state

**Yoga teaches us not to be a slave of the mind. Instead, let the mind be your slave.**

## Inner Freedom (continued)

of freedom, the sage is aware that each individual must be uplifted, must feel good.

So I think all of us, at the same time as we pursue our experience of freedom, must make sure that those around us are uplifted, as well. Having said that, I'll say it's not easy. But it is possible.

### QUESTION:

**These days, time is speeding up. We're slaves to time. I'm curious how we can become free of the time and schedules and things that bind us.**

### GURUDEV:

I think time has always been the same—then and now. We just treat it differently.

For example, before if somebody lived in Mount Barker, the person was just happy to live in that little town. Today, if we meet somebody who is seventy years old and who always lived in Mount Barker, we say, "In his whole life, that person only lived there, and he only knows this." We imply that the person hasn't enjoyed life. But if you ask that individual, he will say he's totally happy having lived in Mount Barker all his life and not having to worry about what's happening in Adelaide.

Some people worry about the entire world—from the time they wake up till the time they go to sleep. And throughout the time they are sleeping. Therefore, they don't find time to help take care of the world. Their *vṛttis*, or thought modifications, are not just about themselves and what is immediately around them but about the entire world. So they feel they have no time.

Even if these people want to sit and be quiet in their front yard or in front of their fireplace, they can't. Because the *vṛtti* in them is "I've got so much to do!"

If this happens to you, throw the question back to yourself: "Who says, 'I have so much to do?'"

You make your own schedule. Your calendar reminds you that you have so much to do. So you can decide with what you want to fill your calendar.

Some people love to fill their time slots up to the last minute. They don't allow themselves even a little bit of freedom within their schedule.

For example, we're going to spend a week in Ganeshpuri at the end of this month, the first week of October. When the trip first began to come together, everybody's question was "What are we going to do for the week?"

I said, "Nothing!"

They replied, "No, we need a plan. If I'm coming, I need to know what I'm going to be doing."

I said, "Well, you go to the temple at 4 a.m., which is when it opens. You have the morning prayers, which are till 6 or 6:30. Maybe we'll do the *Guru Gītā*, so that's 7:30. Have breakfast. Have a little walk around town. See somebody you know. Check out the different places where Bhagavān lived. Go back to the temple at 11 am to chant and attend the noon āratī. Have lunch. Have a little nap because you've been up since 3 a.m. Have some chai. Walk around. Go back to the temple by 7 p.m. and attend the evening āratī. Have dinner. Have a little walk. Go to the 9:30 āratī. By then you're ready to sleep at 10 o'clock." I said, "That is a full day."

**All of us, at the same time as we pursue our experience of freedom, must make sure that those around us are uplifted, as well.**

## Inner Freedom (continued)

Some people still wanted to know, “Will we do anything else in between? What will happen between the breakfast and the 11 o’clock chant?”

Some people go on a vacation for a week. For the whole time they’re on vacation, they feel they have to keep themselves occupied. Like Nasruddin and his chilies, they want to eat their money. When they come back from their vacation, they need to rest at home because they’re tired from their vacation.

This is what the human mind does to itself. We have to constantly remind ourselves, “Relax!”

I share a story. A *sādhū* sits on the verandah of a temple. He sits there for a month.

The manager of the temple sees him there every day. So the manager walks up and says, “What are you doing while you’re sitting here?”

The *sādhū* says, “Sit down. I’ll tell you.”

Three or four minutes go by. The manager says, “So, tell me.”

The *sādhū* says, “Sit. I’ll tell you.”

After a couple more minutes, the manager says, “Look, if you’re not going to tell me, I have to go.”

The *sādhū* says, “I have been sitting here for more than a month. I sit here all day. You can’t even sit for five minutes.”

I hope you get my point. I mean, what does the *sādhū* do? He sits.

Baba said, “Do you think that it is a joke to contemplate God or the Truth, or to repeat the mantra all day? Do you think it’s easy to sit, to keep your mind focused, to keep your mind aware?”

You may think you want to just sit, but it’s not always so easy. As you live life, you may want to put time into your schedule to sit. Of course, then you’ll wonder, “What will I do when I sit? Will I have a cup of chai with my friend? Will I think about what I learned in class?”

Contemplation is constantly taking place. But sometimes it happens at a deeper level. So just sitting allows you to wonder and become aware.

When you sit by yourself, you have no music, no television, no phone. You sit for at least thirty to sixty minutes. Remain quiet. Listen to the wind, the rain. Watch the clouds, the sun. See how it feels. Ask yourself, “Am I happy with myself? Do I feel good about myself?”

Wherever you go, consider the effect you have on others, as well. The *Bhagavad Gītā* says, “I should not be disturbed, neither should I disturb others.”

All this, in my mind, is about freedom, about how we want to live.

**The *Bhagavad Gītā* says,  
“I should not be  
disturbed, neither  
should I disturb others.”**





## G L O S S A R Y

**āratī**

waving of lights to worship a deity

***Bhagavad Gītā***

Hindu scripture

**darśan**

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

***Guru Gītā***

commentary on the Guru

***Kaṭha Upaniṣad***

Hindu scripture nature

**Kṛṣṇa**

Hindu deity, Guru of Arjuna in the  
*Bhagavad Gītā*

**Nāciketa**

boy hero of *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*

**Nasruddin**

Mullah: Sufi folk character

**pratyāhāra**

withdrawal of the senses

**sādhū**

a mendicant

**satsaṅg**

in the company of the Truth

**vṛtti**

modification of the mind

**Yama**

god of death

