



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

Mahāmandaleshwar Swami Nityānanda led a winter retreat at Shanti Mandir in Walden, New York, in February, 2016. This issue of Siddha Marg features a talk Gurudev gave during the Intensive at the start of the retreat. In it, he speaks on the topic of equal vision.

Equal Vision

With great love and respect, I'd like to welcome everyone to our Intensive here this wintry morning.

Our subject is very difficult: equal vision.

The scriptures call it *samadr̥ṣṭi*, equal vision. Each one of us is very aware that conceptually equal vision is a good idea. At least it seems like a good idea. But to actually live it and follow it isn't so easy.

What does it mean to have equal vision? We might be able to speak eloquently about equal vision, about the Truth, but the question boils down to "Can I live it?"

Many people say, "My children won't come to *satsaṅg*."

I tell them, "It's because you don't follow the teachings. You don't live the teachings. You don't practice the teachings. You preach the teachings, yes. But how much of it do you actually live in your life so that your child is able to see that and say, 'Yes, I want that, and therefore I will come'?"

At that point, parents usually say, "You're right."

Somewhere within yourself, you know this is right. Because the Truth dwells within each one of us, it resonates within. The sages make it clear that the Truth was, is, and will be true. If it only was true before or only is true now or only will be true in the future, it is not the Truth. Then it's transitory. Just like us.

Equal Vision (continued)

How true is this body, how real is this body? Only for as long as it is alive. Before it's born, it never existed. The moment you die, you are past. That's a sad thought, I know. It's not how you want to begin your Saturday morning. You want to feel "I am always here—I was, am, and will be here."

Yes, in the sense of Consciousness, in the sense of Truth, you were, are, and will be. But in the sense of body, of how you know yourself now—no.

Just in this last month, many disciples of Baba Muktānanda have passed away. All were eighty-plus, so it's natural. When you tell elder devotees that so-and-so passed away, all of a sudden they feel sad—not just because someone passed away, but because the reality hits home: "I might be next." Of course, nobody will say that to you. They say, "I'm ready. I want to go." But at the same time, they've bought insurance, they've found the best doctors, they've done everything to make sure they'll live as long as possible. Actually, the most important thing is to stay healthy. They don't always think about that.

This topic of equal vision is easy to understand conceptually and intellectually. But it's not so easy to do when you go out into life, into your day-to-day activities and have to deal with all kinds of nonsensical people. I had to add "nonsensical" because dealing with nonsensical people can immediately take away equal vision.

The question arises: "Why don't those people get it?" Some say it's because of the capability of their brain. You can't talk to a kindergarten child about the subject matter of a PhD. Yet, I think when we talk about realizing the Truth, age doesn't matter. In many traditions, we see children who realize the Truth right when they are born. We hear about

people of different ages, different lifestyles, different circumstances who get it.

The questions I ask myself instead are "Why do they get it? How do they get it? When do they get it? What makes it possible for people to get it?"

We all have moments when we get it. The philosophy of the *Vijñāna Bhairava* says that every morning when you wake up, for a fleeting, brief, passing moment, you have an experience of the Self. You're just coming out of sleep; your mind is not quite awake. You haven't fully woken up to "I am" whatever it is you identify as. It's probably a state everybody wants to be in, especially on a cold morning like today.

The sages say that in that moment, we are closest to the Self. In that moment, possibly we experience equal vision. But then the mind wakes up. The eyes wake up. The body wakes up. And the concept of equal vision fades.

Don't get sad. Everybody is looking serious here this morning.

The poet-saint Kabīr says, "I am complete." He has the experience of fullness, of wholeness, of completion. There is no sense of lack.

We can talk about when equal vision comes, or when we have arrived at equal vision, but Baba Muktānanda would say that there is no arriving, there is nothing to be discovered, there is nothing to be found. It is already there. It is simply that the sun rises, and in that light, darkness is gone. All of a sudden you realize, "Wow, I always knew it."



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Compassion, Forgiveness, Straightforwardness

“Consciousness is the same in all. None is dear or hateful to me.”

I often share a Zen story about two monks—one younger, one older—who live in a forest monastery. The younger monk only has one eye.

To stay in that monastery, one must win a debate. That is the fee.

One day, a visitor comes, and the older monk tells the younger monk, “Debate with this guest. But do it in silence.”

The older monk thinks a debate in silence is safe because the younger monk is not so wise. He is new, and when you are new, you think you know a lot, you’re hot. The older monk also tells the guest, “Please debate with the younger monk in silence.”

So the two meet. They bow to each other.

The guest raises one finger.

The younger monk is a little upset, but he thinks, “I’ll be nice to this guest.” He raises two fingers.

The guest raises three fingers.

The younger monk raises his fist.

The guest places an apple in front of the younger one, bows, and goes away.

As the guest is hurrying out, the older monk, who is sitting on the porch, says, “Wait! Tell me what happened!”

The guest says, “I lost the debate. I raised one finger, saying, ‘There is one God.’ The younger monk raised two fingers, saying, ‘There is God and there is His creation.’ So I raised three fingers: ‘Yes, there is God, there is His creation, and there are all of us.’ So the younger monk raised his fist, saying, ‘It all comes from one Consciousness: God, creation, us, everything.’ So, accepting defeat, I placed a piece of fruit in front of him, I bowed, and now I shall move on.”

Then the younger monk comes out. He’s hot, very angry, upset, looking all around. “Where is he? Where is he?”

The older monk says, “Wait! Tell me what happened!”

He says, “You can’t believe how he insulted me!”

The older monk says, “But what happened?”

He says, “First of all, he had the audacity to raise one finger and tell me I had only one eye. I thought I’d be kind and tell him that God is kind and has given him two eyes. And can you believe it: he raised three fingers, saying that between the two of us, there are only three eyes! So I raised my fist. I wanted to punch him! He got so scared that he left a piece of fruit, bowed, and ran away. Now I have to get a hold of him!”

The older monk, like us, laughs.

The scriptures say, “As is your understanding, so is your vision.”

Compassion, Forgiveness, Straightforwardness (continued)

I think of Bhagavān Nityānanda, who would sit in silence, total stillness. He would sit and simply observe all that was happening.

Of course, we always want to fix something, to pitch in. But I think, no matter who you are, where you are, where you live, what you do—this knowledge, this equal vision, is there. The only thing each of us has to do is tap into it.

Many years ago, I memorized the first part of a verse in the ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā* because I thought it was so excellent. *Samo 'haṁ sarvabhūteṣu na me dveṣyo 'sti na priyaḥ*. Kṛṣṇa says, “Consciousness is the same in all. None is dear or hateful to me.”

When we talk about equal vision, we must understand this.

In my fifty-three years of existence and thirty-five years of doing this work, I have seen that although Consciousness exists in everything everywhere, more than ninety-five percent of the human population chooses to deny the existence of Consciousness and simply dwells within the human body. For argument's sake, let's say five percent are different; actually, I think it's more like one percent.

These days, we can know in seconds what happens in any part of the world. Even if we didn't know a person existed in some other country, all of a sudden something happens there and we know within a moment. We hear about all the atrocities that are taking place.

The question to ask is “If there is equal vision, if there is understanding about the oneness of Consciousness, then why do human beings still behave in this manner?”

I think the only conclusion is that ninety-five percent or more choose to live in darkness, choose to be dead to this

understanding. They choose not to practice compassion. They choose not to practice forgiveness. They choose not to be straightforward. Even those who profess to be compassionate, to be forgiving, to be straightforward—how much do they really feel that within themselves?

People say, “You're so sweet. You're so nice. You're so kind!”

You have to ask yourself, “Am I *really* sweet? Am I really kind? Am I really? Or when I open the door to someone, do I just think, ‘Let me make myself presentable?’”

It's easy to think that if you make your hair or face presentable, then all your other qualities will also become presentable. But as soon as something happens, all those qualities vanish. Sorry, but this is the truth. A few heads are nodding, so that means you know this is true.

How do you know if you are really living with equal vision? If you have compassion, forgiveness, straightforwardness.

Suppose you're fast asleep, tired after a long day. Somebody calls you or knocks on your door. You wake up. If your response in that moment is “What can I do? How can I help? Is there anything I can do?” then you know you are moving toward equal vision, straightforwardness, compassion, forgiveness.

But instead you say, “Wait a minute! Didn't you know I was fast asleep?!”

Of course the person knew you were fast asleep. It was obvious because it's the middle of the night. Or it was obvious as soon as you opened the door.

Your response in the moment shows if you are really compassionate, forgiving, loving, kind. Otherwise, you are

How you respond in the moment shows if you are really compassionate, forgiving, loving, kind.

Compassion, Forgiveness, Straightforwardness (continued)

all of these things from 9 am to 6 pm, and then from 6 pm to 9 am, you are just yourself.

When you study Vedānta, the first question that arises is “Do you believe in the existence of the all-pervasive Consciousness?”

The student has to tell the teacher, “Yes, I believe in the existence of the all-pervasive Consciousness.”

If the student agrees, then the teacher says, “Okay, now we have the possibility of moving forward.”

When you go to college, the first question you are asked is “What are you going to major in?” In our day in India, people asked, “Are you going into the arts? Or the sciences? Or commerce?” Those were the three fields from which you could choose. You couldn’t say, “I’ll see as I go along.” No, the day you applied, you had to decide. Clarity within that field could come as you went along, but you had to make that initial choice.

Equal vision has nothing to do with the eyes seeing. It has to do with an understanding within yourself. *Samo ’ham sarvabhūteṣu na me dveṣyo ’sti na priyah.* The mind has to constantly remember “Consciousness exists equally within each and every one.” It is not an idea or a concept, but an awareness that must be present in your mind at all times. Whether you believe it or not is secondary.

Whenever you get angry or upset, you can tell yourself, “I’m being stupid right now. I’m being an idiot right now. I’m angry right now. I’m upset right now. But deep within myself, I am aware that Consciousness exists equally within all, at all times.”

If you are able to hold that thought, I think you have already arrived. Just as the hand is getting ready to punch, the thought arises. And the hand slowly goes down.

In that moment, *viveka*—the ability to differentiate between what is wise and what is unwise—has arisen. When that happens, you know that your practice is bearing fruit. You may not have equal vision yet, but at least you didn’t punch. You don’t have to say, “Why did I even raise my fist? Why did I even get upset?” Just be pleased with yourself in that moment. You can smile to yourself and say, “Got it!”

Even though I say ninety-five percent or more of us do not benefit from or use the teachings, the teachings are not something uncommon. It is natural to know you want to treat someone in the same manner you want to be treated, to be nice to others just as you want others to be nice to you, to be loving to others just as you want others to be loving to you. We know all of this, yet we get caught in a moment of, simply put, ignorance. When you look at yourself in retrospect and think, “Damn it, what happened?” that is a moment of *viveka*.

Those are the moments that are important. And those moments come often in life. Don’t think, “When is that moment?” or “When will I know that moment?” That moment is every moment. And in every moment, you must know. You must know in every cell, every pore, every part of you.



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How Do I Become Free?

“The Self is as vast as the sky.”

The sage Rāmāṇa Maharṣi says, “The ‘I’ casts off the illusion of ‘I,’ and yet it remains as ‘I.’ Such is the paradox of Self-realization.”

Right now, if I ask, “How are you doing?” you would probably say, “I’m doing fine. I have a little cold. I have a little cough. I am whatever.”

The sage tells us to say, “The body has a cold. The body has a cough.” Because we are actually fine: we are Consciousness. So cast off the idea “I have a cough, I have a cold, or I am whatever it is.” Think of yourself as that great Consciousness.

I hope you have equal vision. If not, well, there’s not really much you can do about it—except to know it’s a wonderful thought; it’s a wonderful feeling. I believe that in your lowest moments in life, if you can think that equal vision is even a possibility, that will be very uplifting. But you have to have your own experiences, stories, and feelings attached to that greatness, that vastness.

The *Cāndogya Upaniṣad* says, “The Self is as vast as the sky.”

The mind can relate to the vastness of the sky. When you think of what is vast, you think of the sky. What is fathomless? You think of the ocean as fathomless. What is everywhere? You think of water as everywhere. So by inference, you come to the experience of Consciousness. What is vast? The sky is vast. What is vast like the sky? Consciousness is vast like the sky.

As I said, each of us has experienced the greatness of Consciousness, of divinity. In such a moment, forgetting everything else, you feel that vastness, that greatness. It’s not induced by anyone or anything; it is your own direct experience. It is not equal vision because a sage said it is or because you read about it somewhere; it is what you experience, even if simply for a moment. The mind remembers those moments.

Become firmly rooted in these feelings, in these experiences. When the wind is blowing, it blows away all the dry leaves, yet the trees stay firm, steady. They may move and bend, but the wind cannot blow them away. In the same way, you must become firmly rooted so that when winds blow in your life, you are not uprooted, you are not disturbed; you are steady.

This is one aspect of equal vision. It’s not about being inert, dead, or like a rock. Equal vision is about being very alive, very conscious, very moving; it is about having the ability to bend, yet being firmly rooted.

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* says, “When the mind rests steady and pure, then whatever you desire, those desires are fulfilled, and whatever you think of, those thoughts materialize. So you who desire good fortune, revere the knower of the Self.”

The sage is trying to tell you to let the winds blow away all the unnecessary thoughts, the unnecessary wants, needs,

The Best Is to Be Quiet (continued)

Equal vision is about being very alive, very conscious, very moving; it is about having the ability to bend, yet being firmly rooted.

desires. That which is real, let it remain. As you become established in Consciousness, thoughts arising from Consciousness will come to fruition. They will materialize not because it's a miracle or magic, but because that is what needs to happen.

Frustration arises because you have a fresh desire every single second. All those desires are never fulfilled, never satisfied. Even if one desire is fulfilled, you aren't satisfied because you want something else.

The *Munḍaka Upaniṣad* says, "Having realized the Self, the wise find satisfaction. Their evolution complete, at peace and free from longing, they are at one with everything."

This is the essence of equal vision.

In the ashram in Magod, we have two dogs. One is a Rottweiler, the other is a German shepherd. Once he has been tied, the Rottweiler remains tied. He doesn't do anything about it. The German shepherd, on the other hand, always finds a way to free herself. No matter what type of collar we put on her, she gets free. I'm always amazed because I've tightened the collar, I've gotten a harness that goes through her legs, all of that. I can't for the world of me figure out how she gets out.

So I say that these are the two kinds of disciples, or people, in the world. One says, "Okay, I'm tied." The other says, "How do I become free?"

You have to decide which one you are. The possibility for freedom exists for both. Are you the one who accepts that there is no point in wasting energy and time to figure out how to get out of the leash? Or are you the one who, no

matter how well you have been tied, it's only a matter of time before you're able to get out? The choice is yours.

So hold all of the thoughts we've been talking about. Sit with them. I believe that even if you've moved just a millimeter this morning, that's better than nothing. My belief is that the person who came to satsaṅg and the one who leaves must be different. At least don't go worse off. Tell yourself, "Maybe I don't have equal vision, but I know I can get to it. I know the possibility exists."

You can come into the five percent out of the ninety-five percent.

At least throughout the day today, let these two words—equal vision—remain in your consciousness, awareness, thought process. Somehow you will have an illumination within yourself, for yourself.



G L O S S A R Y

Bhagavad Gītā

Hindu scripture

Cāndogya Upaniṣad

scripture from *Sāma Veda*

dhyāna

meditation

Kabīr

[1440-1518] poet-saint and weaver

Kṛṣṇa

Hindu deity, Gūru of Arjuna in the

Bhagavad Gītā

kuṇḍalinī

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

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad

a scripture

Rāmāṇa Maharṣi

[1879-1950] contemporary Indian saint

samadrṣṭi

equal vision

satsaṅg

in the company of the Truth

Vedānta

philosophy based on the Vedas

Vijñāna Bhairava

7th c. Kashmir Shaivism text

viveka

discrimination between the real and the unreal

