

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

Mahāmandaleshwar Swami Nityānanda has invited everyone to study the Aṣṭāvakra Gītā during 2016. This issue of Siddha Marg features a talk Gurudev gave during a Sunday morning satsaṅg in July at Shanti Mandir in Walden, New York. In it, he offers his commentary on the scripture.

Live the Truth

With great respect and love, I would like to welcome everyone here to our satsaṅg.

No matter where we go, every Sunday we have satsaṅg. The audience changes, the setting changes, the flowers change—each country has its own kinds of flowers. Now it is wonderful to be here and to share these next few months together.

Swami Vishveshwarānanda just spoke to us about the Truth.

Swamiji looks after about fifteen ashrams in India. He is based out of Mumbai and Haridwar, and many, many people come and visit him on a regular basis. No matter where he goes or whom he meets, his talk is always about the Truth.

The great sages we remember are those who didn't just talk about the Truth, but who lived it. They spent a long time internalizing the Truth. Their lives were filled with that experience.

When Swamiji arrived yesterday, I realized it has been thirty-five years since I received the garland from Baba Muktaṇanda. That was at Guru Pūrṇimā, in July of 1981, in South Fallsburg, New York. So it has been thirty-five years of doing this work. People wonder, "How does a relationship last so long?" It's a good question.

Swamiji and I also go back that many years because in October of 1981, his Guru, Mahāmandaleshwar Swami Brahmānandaji Mahārāj, travelled here in the United States and met Baba. Last night, we talked about Baba and about Mahārājji. We talked about the simplicity with which holy men live.

Live the Truth (continued)

Swamiji shared a very simple teaching his Guru gave just before leaving his body. He said, “Your faith in divinity should never waiver.” We should become established in that faith.

When I think of Mahārāji, I think of simplicity. If you met him in the bedroom or in the living room, you met the same man. If you met him having breakfast or having lunch, you met the same man. If you met him on stage at a formal program, you met the same man.

You might say, “Of course you met the same person.”

But, no, it’s not always like that. People wear a mask. They have a façade. They have a role they play. They say, “Let me get ready...” Mahārāji would say simply, “Let’s go.” He would never say, “I have to check my face” or “I need to check myself.” He was ready. As soon as he got up in the morning, he was ready for the day, until he went to bed at night. Even if he had to go onto a stage, he didn’t stop to ask, “How do I look?” What mattered to him was “How am I on the inside?”

Some months ago, I read a quote that said, “Friendship with a noble person is like sugar cane.”

I don’t know if you eat much sugar cane here in New York. But in tropical countries—and in Hawaii and Florida, probably—there’s a lot of sugar cane. It is put into a machine that squeezes it, and sweet juice comes out. And when you eat a piece of sugar cane or suck on it, it’s sweet. You can cut it into small pieces, and then peel off the husk with your teeth. Chewing it is supposed to be good exercise for the teeth. That’s what we’re told.

No matter how many small pieces you break the sugar cane into, it is always sweet. So this quote is saying that friendship with noble people is like that: no matter what you do to them or how you act with them, only sweetness comes out.

Often when I meet Swamiji, I ask him, “What will happen as we go ahead, as we go into the future?”

On the one hand, it looks as if the world is very bright and many good things are happening. But it is also worrisome because many ancient traditions, cultures, ways of life, and practices have been given up, sacrificed.

Last night I said, “Swamiji, just as we believe in the greatness of those who lived before us—and in whose company we lived and whose grace has been bestowed upon us—the next generation also must look back and feel ‘Yes, I lived with somebody worthwhile.’” I said, “We must do something to make that happen.”

Swamiji said, and I also believe, that we pray that some of those qualities of greatness have been imbibed by us. We pray that we carry this sweetness; this love; this *ānanda*, or joy, with us wherever we go. No matter when or where somebody comes and tells us, “Let’s go,” we should be able to say, “Yes, we’re ready. Let’s go.”

As we live in these times today, I feel this understanding is even more necessary. I recently heard somebody say that people’s negative actions cause less danger than is caused when good people don’t perform any actions. Think about this. If you consider yourself a good person or an uplifting person or a peaceful person—whatever label you want to use—not doing something is the most negative, harmful thing you can do.

So let’s remind ourselves, “How much can I do?” How great you will become is not important. What is important is how much good you can do in this world.

“Your faith in divinity should never waiver.”



Don't Become the Soap

If you can come to the experience of equal vision in your mind, everything will be great.

Last summer, we talked about *samadṛṣṭi* and *samabhāva*, the experience of oneness and of equal vision. And we had a discussion a few days ago in which we asked, “Is this real? Can I be the same at all times?”

This is a question I ask myself. No matter who says what, no matter what happens, no matter the situation, can I always remain established in the Truth and not be affected? Thirty-five years later, I can say, “Yes, I’m better at it.”

Still, sometimes I might feel a need to fake it. It’s just human that you want to react when you feel slightly agitated. But you tell yourself, “No, be established in the Truth.” You take a deep breath, or maybe go off to your own room, and say, “Okay, I’m going to find the Truth again.”

I think of the cycles in a washing machine. The cloth remains the same whether it is being washed, whether it is being agitated, or whether it is in the spin cycle. Whatever the machine is doing, the nature of the cloth is not affected.

I always say, “That’s what we need to become.”

The world spins you. The world agitates you. The world’s turbo power does whatever it does. You just remain the same. This is the fruit and the outcome of satsaṅg.

I think social media is beneficial in the sense that people are using it to share satsaṅg, as well. At least the words from satsaṅg are being thrust out to the masses. It’s a start. From there, we have to figure out “How do I live this teaching?”

The storyteller tells us that somebody has given a cow to the ashram. So the manager reports to the Guru: “A cow has been donated.”

The Guru says, “Excellent. We will all drink milk.”

A couple of weeks later, the manager comes back to the Guru and says, “The person who donated the cow took the cow back.”

The Guru says, “Excellent. At least we don’t have to pick up cow dung.”

He didn’t get affected when the cow had come. And he didn’t get affected when the cow was gone. He simply accepted what would happen in each case.

The storyteller says equanimity is all about the state of your mind. If you can come to the experience of equal vision in your mind, everything will be great. Whether you get married or become a *sādhū*, whether you live by yourself or live with others—ultimately, it all boils down to the mind.

The title of the ninth chapter of the *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* is translated as “Indifference.” People in modern-day society sometimes get a little confused about this word. They wonder, “How can I live in the world and be indifferent?”

Remember the washing machine and the cloth. You don’t have to become the machine. You don’t have to become the water. You don’t have to become the soap. You just need equanimity.

Don't Become the Soap (continued)

The *Bhagavad Gītā* speaks about “the place of equanimity, the place of equipoise.” As I said, whether you’re in your bedroom, whether you’re in your living room, whether you’re at the dining table, whether you’re fast asleep in the middle of the night, whether you’re on a stage—the same person is there twenty-four hours a day.

Sometimes people tell themselves, “Now I will be in equanimity. I want to present some teachings about equanimity, so for an hour I can manage myself.” It doesn’t work like that.

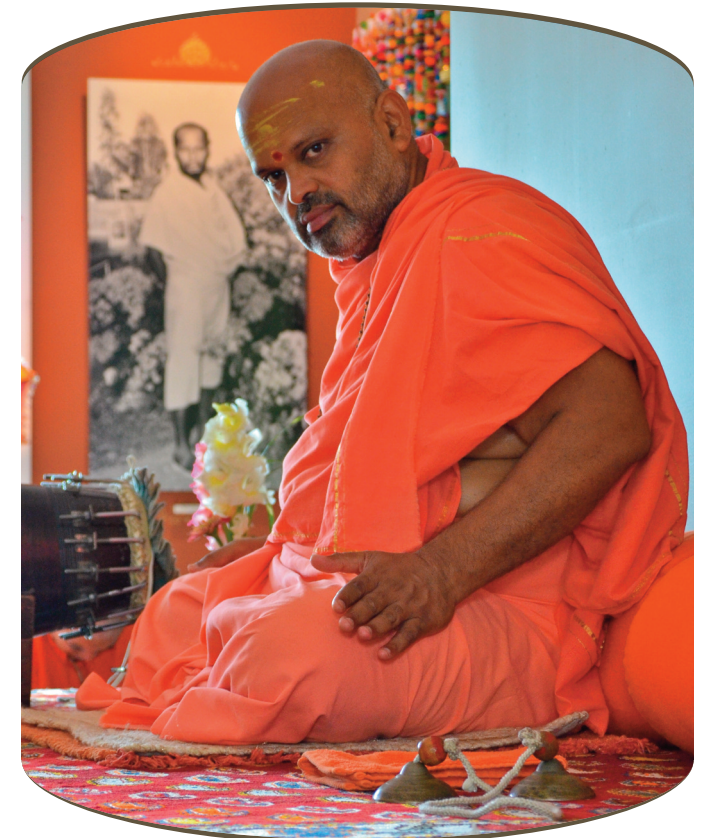
We had a retreat here in February for five days, during which we studied the conversation between King Janaka and Aṣṭāvakra. It was winter, so it was wonderful to snuggle up, so to speak, and think about these lofty thoughts. Hopefully, this upcoming week is not too hot and we can snuggle up in a different way and again sit with these lofty thoughts. We will have a dialogue in the morning and yoga in the afternoon. All of this is designed to bring us to the place of equanimity.

We had an all-day chant yesterday. Today is satsaṅg. We have the upcoming five-day retreat, and then the next week we have a retreat for the youth. Those are two different energies: this week will be very calm, and next week we will have the energy of youth. But all of us, no matter who we are, want to come to that place of stability, of stillness, of equanimity. That’s what we seek. It is not just something we do today. What we seek has always existed, and I’m sure after we all go, it will still be there.

The scriptures tell us the Truth is that which has been, which is, and which will always be. If you can find that Truth within yourself and become established in that, then you have all that you need.

Baba Muktaṇanda put it very simply. He said that at the end of the day, you don’t want your wife or your husband, you don’t want your child or your possessions, you simply want to close your eyes and turn within. No matter how much you love them or enjoy them, you will say, “I don’t want any of you now!”

In that moment, as Baba would say, there is nothing greater than the Self, or *ātman*, which dwells within.



**Truth is that which has
been, which is, and
which will always be.**

The State of Indifference

“The Self is as vast as the sky.”

The situations that occur in our lives, as we know, are constantly changing. And yet we let ourselves get affected. We think, “Oh God!” Then we rush to Facebook and change our status. Two weeks later, we wonder, “What was I thinking?”

Satsaṅg leads us to reflect on this. Ask yourself, “Why did I get so excited last week? Why am I so upset today? I was fine before I came, and I am fine now. Did whatever happened in between really matter?”

When you have a conversation with someone, you may have a glass of water in your hand. If you are busy talking, you don't think about the glass. But after a while, you say, “Can I set this down?” The glass has become heavy because you've been holding it for so long.

Worry is like that. We all hold worry. We should just set it down.

You will ask me, “How?”

When it is a glass of water, of course that's easy. If you want to know how to set down your worries, come to the retreat for the next five days. We will have a conversation. I don't know if we'll have all the answers by Friday.

In India, in the *Gurukula* tradition, a disciple lived with his Guru for a period of time. They probably had a morning session. Then they went about their day. Later, they came back together and discussed further what had been said earlier. The

Guru tried to express the same teachings more clearly. The disciple tried to better understand what had been said.

So if you ask, “How do I set this down?,” it is something you learn over time. One day, the realization dawns: “Ah! This is how I set it down.”

Sometimes we are so constantly active in the process of our evolution, of our enlightenment, that we don't even realize we have actually left our worries behind and moved on. It is only when somebody says, “Oh, you've changed” or “You look different,” that you think, “Really?”

A story is often told about two monks. One older and one younger monk are walking. They come to a stream that is overflowing.

There is a young girl there who wants to cross. So she asks the monks, “Can you carry me across?”

The older monk picks her up, carries her across, and places her on the other side.

As they continue walking, the young monk is agitated. After a while, he says, “Wait a minute! I need to ask you something. We are monks. We can't touch women. Our vows say we can't come in contact with them in any way. Yet you carried that woman across the stream.”

The older monk says, “So?” He says, “I dropped her on the other side of the stream. You are still carrying her.”

The State of Indifference (continued)

Situations like this occur for each and every one of us in life.

When we talk about the idea of indifference, this is the place we want to get to. We want to experience indifference on the inside. It has nothing to do with what happens on the outside. The situations we experience in the outside world are and will be what they are. What matters is the steadiness within yourself. You want to become established in that. Don't let anybody shake you. Don't let anything make you waiver.

Different traditions talk about how situations in your life can throw you into a state of upheaval. I tell people, "It is a test." We take exams at the end of our senior year in school. We give exams at the end of a course. In the same way, we have exams in life, as well.

The situations we find ourselves in test us: How much have you really learned? How much of the Truth do you actually stand for?

Around Baba Muktānanda, we had a series of courses. At the end of every course, he gave certificates. You passed if you had learned, absorbed, or imbibed whatever the teachers had taught. Baba would say, "This certificate simply says you have done well with the material that has been presented. But the real test begins now, when you go home and you find yourself back in a situation with your family, your friends, your work. How much of all of this are you able to actually use? Then you will know whether you really passed the course. The certificate is just a piece of paper."

Thirty-five years ago, Baba Muktānanda put a garland around my neck and announced, "He will be my successor."

The whole ashram got shaken up. They thought, "What?"

Baba clarified. "I just accepted him into my university," he said. "Whether he passes or fails is up to him."

Thirty-five years later, sometimes I ask Baba in my mind, "Okay, what do you think now?" It is our own private conversation.

People come up to me and say, "Baba would be so proud of you."

I tell them, "Well, to me, what really is most important today is how I find myself being in situations. That is what is key."

As we all go through life, as we go through situations, let us find that state of equanimity, of equilibrium, and not get disturbed. That is what Aṣṭāvakra tells King Janaka: "Come to that state of indifference"—meaning don't get affected, don't let anyone throw you.

Chapter 9 is only a few verses. It's not that long. So we have five days to cover eight verses. As I have said before, we don't want to have intellectual conversations. That's not what we are about. We want to understand how to live the teachings. We want to become living examples of the teachings as we go through society, through life.

One day you wake up and think "Wow!" You realize the glass you were holding has been put down. Exactly when it happened and how it happened are not important. The fact that you let go is what is important.

There's no need to preach about or vouch for what we believe in. How we live our life is, I think, in itself, the best gift we can give to ourselves and to our Guru, in gratitude for the teachings, the knowledge, and the experiences we have received.



Don't let anybody shake you. Don't let anything make you waiver.

G L O S S A R Y

ānanda

bliss

Aṣṭāvakra

a Vedic sage

Aṣṭāvakra Gītā

Hindu scripture

ātman

the soul, Self

Bhagavad Gītā

Hindu scripture

dhyāna

meditation

Gurukula

school of the Guru

Guru Pūrṇimā

full moon of the Guru in July

Janaka King

Vedic king, student of Aṣṭāvakra

kuṇḍalinī

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

sādhū

a mendicant

samabhāva

feeling of oneness

samadrṣṭi

equal vision

satsaṅg

in the company of the Truth

