

Siddha Marg



सच्चितानन्द

Vedānta speaks about sat-cit-ānanda, or existence-consciousness-bliss. Sat is that which exists in all things, in all places, at all times. No matter what situation you are in, if you go within, that is what you experience. We might think of it as Truth.

Consciousness, or cit, is the illuminating factor. When we see something, we know what it is from within. Not just through the mind, but from deep within ourselves, we come to understand what that is.

Being in that space of Truth, through understanding what it is, we come to experience ānanda, or bliss.

MAHĀMANDALESHWAR SWAMI NITYĀNANDA

The purpose of Siddha Marg is to share the eternal teachings, sanātan dharma. Formal talks, study, conversations, question and answers, kirtan, meditation, and silence are some of the methods used by Gurudev, Mahāmandaleshwar Swami Nityānanda Saraswati, to share his ruminations on and expression of the universal philosophy.

Consciousness and Awareness

QUESTION:

I tend to think of awareness and Consciousness as the same. What is awareness, and how is it different from Consciousness?

GURUDEV:

When we talk about the highest experience, the word for Consciousness is *caitanya*. It is that which makes everything alive.

Consciousness, of course, is alive and aware within itself. It is what is aware and awake within us even when we are sleeping. It is what tells us what we should or should not do.

When we talk about awareness, however, we are talking more about the limited individual. Our awareness comes from Consciousness. It is not separate from Consciousness. But we think we are separate from it. Therefore an effort has to be made. I as an individual have to use my mind, my senses, and everything that is given to me in this body to be aware.

If something is lying here, I am aware that it's lying here. But I'm not actually using it. I have to make an effort to do so. Similarly, if you want to be connected to the greater Consciousness, you have to make the effort to be aware.

Consciousness and Awareness (continued)

Even if you can't see Consciousness, or Truth, you can experience it. I think even people who claim not to be spiritual or religious are aware that it exists. Many scientists accept that Consciousness exists.

Neuroscientists talk about how the brain is wired. They tell us that when our optic nerve is cut, then all of our visual experience will be lost. But if we have an accident and our auditory nerve is cut, we can still have an auditory experience.

Similarly, with respect to the experience of Consciousness, I think somewhere within us we are aware that Consciousness is there. It is just that in some way, we have cut ourselves off. No accident has occurred, but we may have become upset or angry or disturbed. As a result, we are cut off.

I think the whole struggle of life can be summed up in this way. We want to connect to Consciousness, but we are too disturbed. We can go on like this for many lifetimes. That is the conclusion I have come to after thirty years of doing this work.

Oftentimes when you meet somebody in a soft space, a gentle space, that person is willing to feel connected to the highest experience. But if you challenge him, then he becomes defensive. He doesn't want to be soft. He would rather be unconscious, unaware, insensitive, unwise, foolish. He thinks, "Why do I want to be that open, that sensitive?"

QUESTION:

Several times while Devayani was reading, my awareness went elsewhere. I wanted to hear every word, so I was a little upset. My question is, if my awareness left, was I still here and did I actually not miss what she said?

GURUDEV:

Well, you didn't go anywhere; just the awareness went. The idea was to create a meditative space during this program. We closed the door and we turned the lights out, and the idea was to take us to that peaceful space.

When we hear words that we don't quite relate to or understand, part of us wants to understand or experience them. And I think that sometimes that part can go to a time, or a place, of understanding.

The sages say all our experience, all our knowledge, exists outside time. It is all still there, frozen, in what we can call the *akashic* records. For this reason, people can see into the past and even into the future. It's all there in the ether. Of course, if you see something that is going to happen in the future, you probably won't realize that until later.

So, similarly, if you go to that peaceful space, when you return, you may have an understanding, even if you can't yet say what that is.

QUESTION:

I felt very peaceful upon return. Thank you.

The sages say all our experience, all our knowledge, exists outside time.

Beauty and Power

QUESTION:

Would you please explain the meaning of the peacock?

GURUDEV:

The bird?

QUESTION:

The actual peacock, not just the feathers.

GURUDEV:

I saw an interesting picture yesterday. There are colored peacocks and there are white peacocks, but the bird in this picture was half colored and half white. I don't know if it was a real picture. We saw peacocks a lot as we grew up in the ashram around Baba. But I have never seen a half-white and half-colored peacock before.

The peacock feather is worn by Lord Kṛṣṇa. Baba often used to say, true or not, that a male peacock has the ability to impregnate a female peacock through sight. For this reason, he said, the peacock is very powerful. Therefore, he said, "I use the peacock feathers in *darśan*."

Baba started using peacock feathers when we began to get a couple thousand people every night. To touch everyone would have been a lot of work. I think when they were bopped with the peacock feathers, they were happy that they had been touched by the Guru.

It's a beautiful bird, especially when it dances. You don't enjoy the feathers as much when they are closed as when

they are open like a fan. This is one thing we can learn from the peacock. Just as it shows its feathers when it dances, if we open ourselves up, we can be more beautiful. But if we keep our feathers closed, if we keep ourselves closed, we don't allow our beauty to be seen.

As a child, we would hear that a peacock dances because rain is coming, and it welcomes the rain. I don't know if that's true or not. But birds and animals are very in touch with the natural world. Now, with all of the electromagnetic waves we've put out there, they claim birds and animals have lost some of their natural instincts. So have humans.

To me, animals show a sense of pride in life. Also, no matter how small or big the animal, each one shows its power. I think we as humans can learn that the same power exists within us.

An animal doesn't possess *viveka*, discrimination. A human, on the other hand, has the understanding and the ability to use power wisely.

At the same time, I would say people often are afraid of animals. I think there is no need to be afraid of animals. An animal will not do anything to hurt you unless you antagonize it. A human may do something, whether you antagonize him or not. A human reacts without reason, whereas an animal does not.

So a peacock, in my mind, represents beauty. It represents grandness. I think we are drawn to things in nature because of their beauty and their power and because they can teach us to understand our beauty.



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The Amazement of Awakening

QUESTION:

How did *śaktipat* fit into Baba's spiritual journey? I know he had been meditating and met his Guru, and I'm hearing about his absolute amazement. But what does amazement mean? What follows amazement?

GURUDEV:

From reading Baba's life story, we know that at age fifteen or so—I say “or so” because his biographer writes fifteen—when he was a school boy, Bhagavān Nityānanda walked by and touched him. That started a process. He left home shortly thereafter, and wandered around India for approximately twenty-five years looking for a Guru.

During that time, Baba studied Vedānta. He studied hatha yoga, he studied Āyurveda. He lived in Varanasi for a while. He studied magic, which was part of the training of *sādhus* in those days. He was seeking. I don't think he knew himself what he was seeking, yet he knew that he was seeking. He had left home in search of something.

Eventually, Baba ended up back in the state of Maharashtra, where he met two sages. They sent him to Ganeshpuri and told him, “Your future lies there.”

So he went to Ganeshpuri, where Bhagavān resided. I think he went a couple of times, actually. And he realized there was a connection, so he started to spend some more time there. And one day it came to pass that he received *śaktipat*.

I have shared before that Bhagavān moved to three different places over the span of the thirty years that he lived in Ganeshpuri. He didn't want to be controlled; he didn't want anybody to tell him what to do or what not to do. So, whenever he felt someone was trying to control him, he moved to a new place. We can see that he lived a very free life.

Whether Bhagavān actually took on disciples is still a big question in many people's minds. There are a few people who claim to be his disciples, who claim to have been directly initiated by him. Baba of course is one of them.

Baba spoke many times about how, after his meeting with Bhagavān, he arrived at the spot where his ashram is now, and he had an experience of oneness with the divine. There is a temple there now of the Goddess, although I don't think it was there at that time. But he had an experience of the Goddess there. So he took this as his day of *śaktipat*, as his day of awakening.

All of this, as you said, amazed him. And sometimes it got to be too much for him, also.

Then Bhagavān sent him to the village of Yeola, where he spent the next nine years. If we look at his schedule during this time, that is also amazing. He woke up rather early in the morning, probably around 2:00 a.m., and meditated. Then he did some hatha yoga, and he did some studying. Somebody from the village brought him a little milk, a little snack. After he had eaten a bit, he would study some more.

“Your future lies there.”

The Amazement of Awakening (continued)

Around 11 o'clock, one of the farmers in the area brought Baba lunch. After his meal, he would have a little rest, and then he would study again, and meditate. His day alternated between study, meditation, yoga, and *japa*.

Baba tells us that on some days when people came to see him, he felt like meeting them. On other days, he was not interested at all and would send everyone away. Sometimes he had Babu Rao sing for him because he had intense headaches, and that helped. Baba didn't know what caused those headaches. During the first two or three of those nine years, Baba had many experiences, but he did not understand what was happening to him.

One day, Baba went to somebody's home, a little ways away from the village where he was living. He was inspired to open a cupboard in the house. In it, he found a secret book that explained everything he had been experiencing. He understood that he had received śaktipat from Bhagavān Nityānanda, and that all of what had been happening to him was due to śaktipat.

After that, Baba became a bit calmer. He still had days of amazement at everything that was going on within him. In those days, not as many books had been written about spiritual awakening. That was why he wrote *Play of Consciousness*. He thought, "People who come now and receive this experience will have an easier time if they can understand a little about what śaktipat is."

I find it amazing how many people claim they can give śaktipat. I laugh to myself only because I come from this tradition and I know how few people had any knowledge of śaktipat. There may have been a smattering of people here and there around India who talked about śaktipat. They probably had an internal connection, we could say, that

allowed them to send disciples to each other—to say, for example, "Your future lies there" or "You will understand this better if you go there and find a secret book."

Today it has become commonplace for people to say, "I give śaktipat." Yet I think what happens is not quite the same.

Somebody was talking the other day about what happens if you take a nine-volt battery and stick it to your tongue. You get a little buzz. She said she liked that feeling. It's just nine volts; it's not that much. But if you've never had an electric shock of any kind, then I think nine volts make you feel, "Wow, that's something!" I've had shocks of 220 volts, so that makes even 110 volts seem like nothing. But 220 is nothing when you realize what 240 or 440 can be.

When many of the people around Baba first met him, they were amazed at what they saw. Even today, if you're a new person, you may walk in the door and think about how cuckoo those people seem to be. But if you've had some semblance of an experience along the way yourself, then you recognize that it is all part of the spiritual journey.

Often at the beginning, one has what I call a "wow experience." In fact, unless you have something that feels amazing, you may never get onto the spiritual path in the first place. Once you've had that amazing experience, you pursue the path with the wish, the strong desire, to get back to it again.

Baba's initiation from Bhagavān gave him a tremendous experience. Even though he had already done a lot of *sādhana* in the twenty-five years prior, I think that is what inspired him to stay focused. And through that focus he attained that which he had set out to find in his life.

Once you've had that amazing experience, you pursue the path with the wish, the strong desire, to get back to it again.

God Is Light

QUESTION:

It was mentioned that a light passed between Nityānanda and Muktaānanda. I was wondering if that light has ever been defined. Is it similar to the light of *Paramātmā* that Śrī Aurobindo talked about?

GURUDEV:

Definitely. The light we experience is the light of *Paramātmā*, the light of the Self, the light of Consciousness. Great sages like that live in the constant experience of divinity, of Truth. They can transmit that kind of light. When we are open, we can experience that light, as well. So we have to have a mind that is that open, a heart that is that open, to be able to experience that.

The *kuṇḍalinī*, the energy, is everywhere.

QUESTION:

When the *kuṇḍalinī* is rising, does one energy descend and the other ascend so that they meet or are they all the same energy?

GURUDEV:

The light of *Paramātmā* that he asked about is the light of God, which is always there.

I often think that the idea that the *kuṇḍalinī* rises within us is actually imagery the sages have created. If you listen in between their words, you'll find that they are saying the *kuṇḍalinī*, the energy, is everywhere.

Therefore, I tell people don't get so caught in the imagery.

For example, some people say, "My energy is stuck in that *cakra*." Or "My energy is stuck here." Because the sages told us it rises, we expect a certain experience. Instead, simply understand that you are going through a process.

At the same time, you have to realize that the energy sometimes can be working furiously in one part of the body. And you will feel its furiousness there. You will feel its furiousness in different parts of the body at different times. It is more about evolution than about rising straight from here to there.

Kuṇḍalinī is light; energy is light. God is light. Baba used to say that when we live in the experience of unity Consciousness, we don't see gross forms, as we might see now, but only light. Even now, when we're in what you could call an ethereal state, where things appear a bit foggy or out of focus, we see light.

QUESTION:

Does the light absorb you?

GURUDEV:

You are absorbed in it. It's as if I were to step out now: would I be absorbed in the sunlight or would the sunlight be absorbed in me?

QUESTION:

Wouldn't it be both you in it, and it in you?

GURUDEV:

Yes.



G L O S S A R Y

akashic records

the record of all that happened and will happen
[from ākāśa: ether, space]

Aurobindo, Śrī

[1872-1950], sage and philosopher

Āyurveda

the ancient Indian science of health

caitanya

alive, full of consciousness

cakra

energy center in the subtle body

darśan

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

dharma

right action, righteous law

japa

repetition of a mantra

Kṛṣṇa

Hindu deity, Guru of Arjuna in the
Bhagavad Gītā

kuṇḍalinī

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

Paramātmā

Supreme Self, God

sādhana

spiritual practices

sādhū

a mendicant

śaktipat

transmission of śakti by the Guru

sanātan

universal, eternal

satsaṅg

in the company of the Truth

Vedānta

philosophy based on the Vedas

viveka

discrimination between the real and the unreal

