

Siddha Marg



सच्चिदानन्द

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 Saraswatī, to share his ruminations on and expression of the universal philosophy. This issue features excerpts from a talk he gave after the celebration of Navrātra at the ashram in Walden, New York, this spring.

Salutations to the Goddess

With great love and respect, I welcome you all to our Sunday *satsaṅg*, which we have here every Sunday, and to this festival of Caitra Navrātra, or *vasānta* Navrātra, held in the spring season. It almost looks like spring outside today.

The sages devised both these Navrātras—*vasānta* and *śarada*, spring and fall—at times when the weather changes. As you heard over the last two days, there was a lot of coughing here. That's what happens when nature changes outside and we don't take care of the body.

I watched a video of a talk recently by a doctor who had lost his son to a vitamin deficiency. He said, "As a doctor, I wasn't able to help him, because we only know what to do after sickness arises." He didn't talk about any of the traditional ways of medicine, but he said, "We are taught in medical school to look only at disease; instead, we should be looking at how to attain optimal health."

What he said reminded me of a story Baba Muktānanda used to tell.

A man goes to Mullah Nasruddin and says—like some of you here—"I have a cold and a cough."

Nasruddin says, "Go home and bathe for the next seven days with cold water. And then come back."

The man says, "I will have pneumonia!"

Salutations to the Goddess (continued)

When you invite a God or a Goddess, that deity comes with his or her retinue.

Nasruddin says, “Exactly. I have a treatment for pneumonia. But for this kind of basic, simple cold or cough, there is nothing I can give you.”

When we follow the tradition of Navrātra in India, my doctor gives me a little shot of neem juice. For the ten days of Navrātra, every morning we take this bitter drink. Many of you in the West have now heard of neem and its beneficial medicinal effects.

On Tuesday, Lavarji invoked the Goddess in this vessel of water. Water is the best conductor in nature. Just put your foot in some water and hold onto an electric wire, and you’ll see. The sages realized that water is the best way to invoke energy, so they taught priests that this is what they should use to gather energy.

When you invite a God or a Goddess, that deity comes with his or her retinue.

In the ancient tradition, no matter where you were from, you never sailed alone, you were never allowed to go somewhere alone. In India, when we were young, we would look at the elders who wanted someone to go with us, and say, “I don’t want him. I can go alone, I’m old enough now. I’m not a baby, what will he do?”

But the elders would say, “No, it’s okay, just take him along.”

Sometimes we would figure out how to dump the person. But if he was smart or had been dumped before, he also knew what tricks we were up to. So we didn’t go alone. I see the elders laughing now; they can relate to all of this.

When Lavarji invokes the deity, it’s the same thing. He invites the universal Consciousness, and she comes with her many attendants. This includes the nine planets and Lord Gaṇeśa and the fifty-six beings, and so on and so forth.

In Magod, usually whenever we travelled, somebody would ask me, “Who’s going to be coming with you?”

I said, “Well, whoever is around at the time and I feel is appropriate can come.” Simple, right?

But one day I was told, “You can’t choose anymore.”

I said, “Why?”

They said, “Because you will leave some out.”

I said, “Okay, whoever is going to come along, first of all, has to be useful.” It’s not that those who come are there just to occupy space, eat, and make merry. Everyone who comes on a tour has to fulfill a purpose. They can play the harmonium or the drums or the cymbals, or sing, or do *pūjā*, or cook, or drive, or clean.”

I said, “Of the many *sevās* on the tour—whatever role needs to be played, or whatever role has been given to you—I don’t want to worry, ‘Is that job being fulfilled or not?’ I just want to know that it’s happening from early morning, through the day, or at night.”

Each one of us, I believe, in our life, has this kind of role, or purpose. The way I think of it, that role becomes our connection to divinity, to Consciousness, to Truth.

The question arises in each one’s mind: “What is it that I must do? What should I do to constantly maintain this connection?”

Connection does not happen automatically. It happens because of the effort that each and every one of us puts forth. And the effort we put forth bears fruit.

We worshipped the Goddess just now by reciting thirteen chapters of the *Chandi Pāṭh*. If you have your book, or if you study it when you go home, you will read the refrain

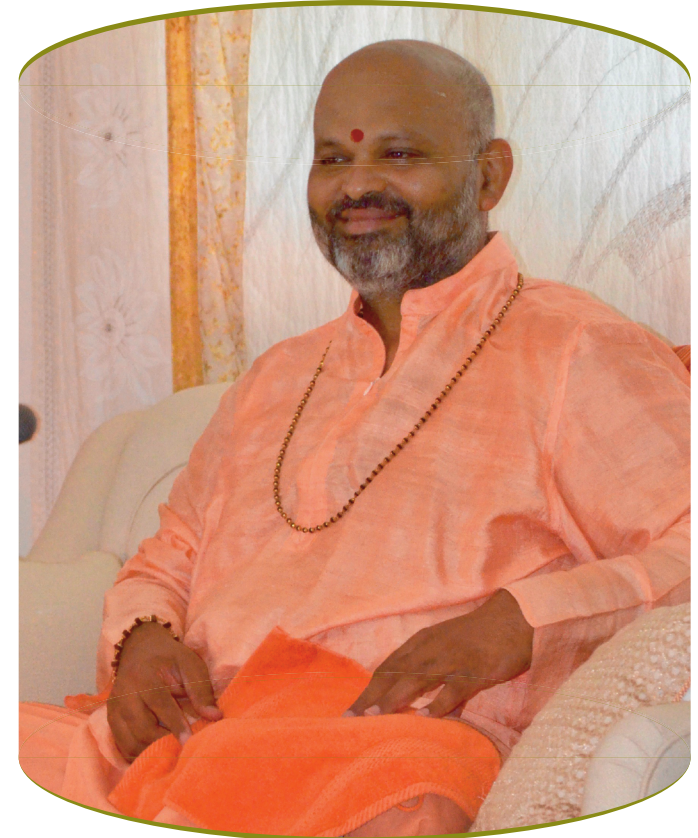
Salutations to the Goddess (continued)

Yā devī sarva-bhūteṣu, namas-tasyai, namas-tasyai, namas-tasyai namo namaḥ. You understand, “In all of these various forms in which you exist within me”—whether man or woman, it doesn’t matter—“I offer my salutations, I offer my salutations, I offer my salutations to you.”

There is a verse I love that is attributed to Abhinavagupta. He says, “O Goddess, whatever thoughts arise in my mind, whatever forms I see in this world, are nothing but an expression of your own form. I have *darsan* of you through all of these forms. All the activities that take place in this world are nothing but the expression of your various forms; therefore, everything should be considered as pūjā, as worship.”

Each of us must bring our mind to the place where it constantly maintains that connection, maintains that oneness.

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What Are You Going to Offer?

“An army of lovers can change the world.”

When we traveled through Australia in 2010, everywhere I went, I shared that we have to be like milk. One fear you have when you have milk is that if a drop of lemon falls into the container of milk, all the milk will be spoiled. It will become curdled. Of course, whether that is a good thing or not depends on if you like cheese.

In the community we are in, or the world we are in, we definitely don't want to be that drop of lemon. We can decide later whether we can become milk, but let's first work on making sure that “I will not be that drop of lemon juice.” I think we can begin there.

We want this sweetness, this kindness, this love, this compassion to spread.

When we had our retreat this past year, the T-shirt that was given out said, “An army of lovers can change the world.” This came from something I heard Baba say in 1978 in Oakland, California. He said, “If I had an army of lovers...” So we got rid of the “If I had” and just wrote “An army of lovers can change the world.” That idea has to be planted so it can happen. And we must do it.

Recently I read a little story about a girl who was going around selling milk. In the old days, one used to get a bottle of milk or a can of milk delivered at one's door. In India, we still have people who come around on their bicycle or motorcycle with containers of milk, and they measure out a quarter of a liter or half a liter or one liter.

So this girl is selling milk, and a boy comes with his bottle. She just pours the milk into it. She doesn't measure a quarter or a half of a liter, or a liter; she just pours the milk.

An observer who is standing nearby asks his friend, “Why didn't she first measure the milk?”

The friend says, “Because that's the boy she loves.” In other words, because she loves him, there is no reason to measure what she gives him; she gives unconditionally, without measurement.

A *sādhū* is also standing there. He listens to these friends talking, and he says to himself, “Each day I sit here and repeat, ‘*Om Namaḥ Śivāya, Om Namaḥ Śivāya, Om Namaḥ Śivāya.*’ And then I think, ‘Oh my God, how many more repetitions do I have to do?’”

This is what we do. We think, “I have to do one *mālā*.” Or “I have to do five.” Or “I have to do eleven.” Each one of us has our method. For example, we say, “I'm doing eleven *mālās* for you, Baba. Look, watch me.”

And then we question: “One *mālā* is only worth half a liter of milk?”—a liter of milk meaning grains of compassion, of deliverance. We think, “No, one *mālā* should be worth at least one liter of milk.”

The *sādhū* realizes, “That girl loves that boy and gives him milk without measuring, but I claim to love God and I am measuring each mantra I offer. I am bargaining with God. I am not giving unconditionally.”

What Are You Going to Offer? (continued)

I would like to end by saying, “Think about this: what good can I offer society?”

Society is first of all your own family—your parents, husband, wife, brother, sister, mother, father, and so on. We all have different roles, or places, in society, in life. After you have the people you live with every day, you have those who are a little bit further outside. You have your coworkers. You have your regular, everyday contacts. And then you have your once-in-a-while contacts.

Here we have our once-a-year visitors. They know, “I only come here for this day, or this program and that program. I won’t see you again until next year on this day.” At least there’s some clarity.

So think about what you can do, what you can offer. You can look it up on the Internet to get some ideas.

Each society has its own way to help others. It could be “Let’s go somewhere and feed or clothe people.” Or you could choose to do something different. For example, organize a party.

A long time ago there was a girl in Australia who was in college and had just gotten associated with Shanti Mandir. For some occasion, she organized a sit-down dinner, like we do in the ashram. In front of everybody, she put an envelope that contained a gift certificate for the eye camp we hold near Haridwar. She told her friends, “I don’t want a gift for myself. I don’t need one more thing, but if you wish to give something, this is something you can do.”

I’m not going to tell you what you should do or must do; I’m just suggesting something you can think about. That’s part of my job—to provoke thought. And I’ll leave it at that.

Of course, this thought is provoked within myself, as well. Each day when I wake up, I think, “Okay, what are we going to do today?”

When we have a five-day or a seven-day or a ten-day retreat, people come with their notebooks and pens and I have to tell them, “The Self is within you.” I wonder, “How do I tell this differently today?” This message is already written in the *Upaniṣads*. It’s already in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. I wonder how I can say it now so they go home today feeling, “Wow! That was something new.”

It’s not new. It is that which has always been.

Today, hopefully you remember: Never travel alone. Always take somebody with you. Remain connected to God. Be milk. If anybody wants to be lemon juice, it’s okay; we can handle you, too. And don’t measure, just give.

This is the vibration, this is the energy, this is the Consciousness we want to carry with us as we go through life.

I invite you to come again this summer. Spend a weekend, a few days, a few weeks, a few months, a few years, a few lifetimes: the choice is yours.



Think about this: what good can I offer society?

G L O S S A R Y

Abhinavagupta

[993-1015] Shaivite sage

Bhagavad Gītā

Hindu scripture

Caitra

March/April

Chandi Pāṭh

Sanskrit mantras to the Goddess

darśan

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

Gaṇeśa

elephant-headed god, son of Śiva,
remover of obstacles

mālā

a string of beads used like a rosary

Nasruddin

Mullah: Sufi folk character

Navrātra

nine-night celebration of the Goddess

Oṃ Namaḥ Śivāya

mantra; literally, “I bow to the divine”

pūjā

worship

sādhū

a mendicant

śarada

autumn

satsaṅg

in the company of the Truth

sevā

selfless service to the Guru

Upaniṣads

ancient Hindu scriptures

vasānta

spring

