

Siddha Marg



GOD DWELLS WITHIN YOU AS YOU.

*Baba Muktañanda would say,
“God dwells within you as you.”*

Words alone cannot adequately describe, explain, or take us to that deep place. We have to allow ourselves to be taken there. We have to become immersed within, where ānanda, bliss, continually arises, rather than remain in the shallow realms of mind and emotion.

This is the teaching. This is the understanding we must cultivate in our life.

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.

Become waves in the ocean

QUESTION:

Sometimes I feel the bliss is so overwhelming that I have to shut it down or run away. I want to know how to deal with it so I don't need to push it down or dampen it.

GURUDEV:

Here is a physical exercise you can try. Every day, take a pitcher or a mug of water and go down to the stream. Throw the water into the stream, and watch what happens.

The water merges into the stream. Nothing actually happens to it. Except you can't take that water back out.

What stops any of us from merging into the ocean of bliss?

Truly speaking, this is a fear everybody has. You know it and are expressing it. But if you go around the room, I am sure everybody will acknowledge having the same fear. Because the question arises: if I merge into the ocean of bliss, what will happen to the “little me”?

What happens to the little me is like what happens when you take that pitcher and throw the water into the stream. There is no more “me,” no more “I.” There is no more “my” pitcher of water either. It all becomes one with the water.

Become waves in the ocean (continued)

So we try to go to that place within where there is no “I” vibrating as a separate individual.

For example, when you chant, and are able to let go, you become immersed in that place for at least a few moments. When this happens, the chanting is very good.

Tonight we’ll chant *Hare Rāma*, *Hare Kṛṣṇa*, and I hope the chant takes us to that place. As the drummer, this is what I try for. But I have fifty to seventy-five other elements to work with, so I’m not always successful. If those elements come together, we get to the place where all the separate “I’s” dissolve. Of course they still exist, but subjectively speaking they disappear. They become waves in that one ocean.

If you are asking from an expanded state, then even the question “Who am I?” disappears.

When we are chanting – whether it is the *Guru Gitā* or *Hare Rāma* – we don’t always get to that place. But when we do, it’s wonderful. And even if we don’t, we can feel a shift, a change. That separate “I” may still be there, but some development has occurred. We’re walking toward the ocean. We have dropped some things off because we realize we don’t need the extra baggage.

When we traveled with Baba on his Third World Tour, each of us was allowed two suitcases. But we stayed in some places for six months. Staying in a place for that long, you accumulate things. So at the end of six months, you have to decide: “Okay, what can I let go of? Of all the things that don’t fit inside my two suitcases, what don’t I need?”

It is a process of elimination. You think, “Oh, that person really wanted me to have this thing...”

“Yes, but it doesn’t fit in the suitcase.”

So you have to say *svāhā*, you have to let it go.

As you do *sādhana*, you go through a process that at first is filled with “I,” “I,” “I.” Eventually you reach a place of greater understanding, and you ask yourself, “Who is this I?”

If you are asking from an expanded state, then even the question “Who am I?” disappears. Because there is no “I” to ask the question.



Surrender happens automatically within

QUESTION:

How does one surrender?

GURUDEV:

I remember a particular incident that occurred in 1978. A man came up to Baba, about a month into our stay in Melbourne. He brought his passport, his house keys, his car key – everything. He put all of it on Baba's footstool, which was in front of his throne, and said, "I surrender to you."

Baba said, "Good. Now you can take all your things back."

We always think surrender means giving up our material possessions. Yesterday someone asked me about the statement in the scriptures that says, "Everything you own – your money, your wife, your child, your house – belongs to the Guru, to God." He asked, "Does the scripture really mean this?"

I said, "Yes. When one has the understanding that the Guru and I are one, then there are no two. It follows that everything belongs to that principle, whether we call it the Guru or God."

Of course, the question arises: if it's all one, who provides? We may work for eight or ten hours a day, and we think we're going to get money as compensation. We think, "It's my boss who's giving me the money."

But is it really? Someone who's not separate from us is watching over us to make sure we get that money.

Sometimes when I think of surrender, I think of animals in the wilderness. They live a truly surrendered life, not worrying about tomorrow. From them we can see that true surrender is surrender of the mind, of the ego, of duality, of the sense of separation.

As soon as we think something is "mine" and that "I need to give," we have created duality. But when we have truly surrendered, we see that whatever we think of as "mine" actually belongs to God, to the Guru, or to whomever we regard as our deity.

As our understanding expands, we can better grasp what surrender is. It is not an act that needs to be performed externally; it is something that happens automatically within us. The Indian scriptures contain many stories that talk about God coming in various forms to test His devotees to see how much they have truly surrendered.

Anyway, today you have all surrendered to sitting inside this tent!



Love is already there

QUESTION:

Maybe God wants to show us that we have to find something through sorrow, through pain, to be guided back to the love that we can experience. Is this how God teaches us?

GURUDEV:

I will quote from Kabir. He says, “Curse that happiness that makes your heart forget God’s name; welcome that pain and suffering that compel you to repeat God’s name at every moment.”

The only problem I sometimes find is that people get too caught up in the sorrow and forget to go for the love. A lady in New York constantly argues with me about this, saying that she’s closest to God when she is sorrowful.

But my argument is that it’s human nature to prefer the company of someone who is joyous over the company of someone who is sorrowful. If someone is joyful, I want to sit with him or her for hours. But if someone is sorrowful, I might go out of sympathy, but I can’t wait to get out of there.

Yes, hard times, pain, and suffering do remind us of God. They remind us to think about the purpose of human life. But sometimes we take this experience too far. How many times do you have to stick your hand in fire before you discover that it burns you?

The scriptures talk about a love that is experienced deep within and doesn’t come from ego. Here’s how I see the difference between this experience and ordinary love: When I love from my ego, I want that love to be acknowledged. But when the love comes from a deep place, it doesn’t matter whether it’s acknowledged or not; I still have the feeling of love.

QUESTION:

But if you have this true love and just indulge in it, you’ll be on your own and isolated. Surely this can’t be the goal or the end of the process?

GURUDEV:

The ones who have experienced this love never really sat isolated. Many went out and were with people. In our time, we can take Mother Teresa as an example. Her love led her to take care of people who couldn’t take care of themselves or who were not being taken care of by other people. Her big organization is well set up today, but when she began, I’m sure she had a lot of problems.

Although it seems that a person who becomes immersed in love would be isolated, in reality he or she is not. Such a one realizes that all of what happens in this world is just part of the ongoing cycle of creation, sustenance, and dissolution. When we have this understanding, we are able to sit back and watch – or to step forward and take action – without becoming involved in the cycle.

When I love from my ego, I want that love to be acknowledged. But when the love comes from a deep place, it doesn’t matter whether it’s acknowledged or not; I still have the feeling of love.

Love is already there (continued)

QUESTION:

So, I must find true love within myself, but contentment will only come when I can share this love with other people?

GURUDEV:

They are both within you. When you share love with people, it only increases the love that is already within you.

It's like putting your money in the bank. You put it in, and then it gives you interest. It's not that the bank will give you money on which to make interest. You've already put it there. In the same way, the love is there within you, and the joy and contentment are there, and they increase when you share them.

When you share love with people, it only increases the love that is already within you.

QUESTION:

So which is more important: having love or giving love?

GURUDEV:

The most important thing is to feel love. When you have love, then it automatically oozes out of you.

This goes back to what I said earlier. When you have love, people want to come and be with you. It's not that you have to go out and say, "I love, therefore come to me." Because there is love, they automatically come.

QUESTION:

It sounds logical that if I have love, I can share love. For me, love is just to accept myself to the fullest extent, which also means accepting the negative side. Everybody has many problems, but to really fully accept oneself, one develops this love.

GURUDEV:

The love I speak about is already there. It does not need to be found or developed or worked upon.

If in our limited state we share love, certainly it can be helpful. But still, that kind of love comes from ego. In that limited love, if a negative experience were to take place, we would feel hurt. But when we come from the deepest experience of love, we give without expecting any kind of return from the person to whom we give.

Of course, all of us have to accept ourselves as we are. Baba's teaching was "God dwells within you, as you." As we learn to love and accept ourselves, we tap into the love that is already there.



Whatever takes place is what you need to experience

QUESTION:

When one first begins *sādhana*, there's a lot of excitement. *Kriyās* and visions happen. But later on, in my case anyway, it seems to get a lot more placid. Is this because I'm not striving enough or is it just the natural progression?

GURUDEV:

The example I use is that when you drive from Delaware to New York, you only go through New Jersey once. And as you go even further north, you don't go into New Jersey again. Similarly, whatever experiences you may have in *sādhana* do not repeat themselves.

At the same time, when you begin anything, there is a lot of excitement, enthusiasm. You sit regularly for meditation. You do *japa* regularly. You read the scriptures regularly. The practices are done regularly. Then as time goes on, there's a little bit of slackening. You slip a little bit, and then you pick up your pace again. This up and down, up and down goes on.

At other times, you come to a plateau where nothing seems to be happening. You don't have *kriyās* or visions. But things start to happen in other parts of your life. Whatever takes place is what you need to experience.

Once there was a man who had been on tour with Baba for a few years. He went up on the *darśan* line one day, and thought to himself, "All these people get up and give these experience talks about the blue pearl, their visions, the joy and bliss they feel, this and that." As he approached Baba, he made a mental list of the experiences he thought he should have.

Then he bowed and said, "Okay, Baba," – he didn't say it verbally, just mentally – "these are the things I would like to experience."

Within the next three days he had all the experiences he wanted. And at the end of the last one, Baba came to him in a vision and asked, "Is there anything else you'd like to see?"

The man was blown away. He began to look at his life, and he realized that so much transformation had taken place since he met Baba. Everything that needed to take place had happened.

I was asked to give my first experience talk when I was fifteen. I went up to my room and I thought, "What am I going to talk about? Am I going to talk about Baba yelling at me? Or am I going to talk about how he brought me up?"

As I sat down and began to think about the years I'd spent around Baba, I began to more fully appreciate all the different things that had occurred.

Whatever takes place is what you need to experience (continued)

For this reason, I don't like to tell people what they will experience. A new person who walks in cold has no idea what he or she is walking into. But as soon as this person thinks he or she knows what that experience will be, then the person will look for it. A lot of times, people look for visions in meditation. They want to see lights or hear sounds. Yet, whatever a person has within will manifest, regardless.

In the old days, people sat down and Baba simply walked in. Nobody told you he was going to give you *śaktipāt*. Nobody told you anything about what you'd experience. You just sat there. Often you felt something had happened, but you didn't know what it was. And then you would go to someone you knew and ask, "What was that?" But that person didn't know, either.

It was not until 1970, after Baba wrote *Play of Consciousness*, that people started calling it *śaktipāt*, or *kuṇḍalini* awakening, and using all the correct terms. The same experiences had been happening all along, it was just that nobody could say what they were.

Now, because we've read so many books and heard so many talks, we think, "Okay, this is what's happening to me. And I want that to happen, too."

But every step along the way in *sādhana*, things change. One year you might be very much into meditation. The next year you might be into japa. The next year you might be into doing nothing, just being silent.

We go through these phases, and each is part of our own unique development. The fact that you don't spend a lot of time meditating during one phase doesn't mean you

are no longer into meditation. It's just that meditation has shifted to a different form or a different level of your being.

I think this is one of the tricks Baba liked to play on us. When you first met him, he would give you such a powerful experience that you'd be totally blown away. You'd think, "God, this is great! I'm going to sit for meditation every day, and this is what's going to happen." And then you would sit the next day and nothing would happen.

So I like to think of these experiences as catalysts. They get you going on the path. You're still here, so I think we can say it has worked for you!

QUESTION:

Is there a particular time of day that is better to do japa or repeat the mantra?

GURUDEV:

I think before going to bed is a great time because then the mind is filled with the mantra. And the other time is early in the morning when you first wake up.



Whatever a person has within will manifest, regardless.

Let your joy shine through

QUESTION:

I work with people who are in a lot of pain, homeless, hungry, tired, and abused. Often I feel that nothing I might do is ultimately going to help them.

GURUDEV:

I think people who are homeless first need food and shelter. The second thing that helps is your love and your joy.

Whenever I meet homeless people, I try to make them laugh or have fun. Usually they can relate to that. If you try to talk to them about God, their response is, “What God?” Because they see God as the one who put them where they are. So they say, “I don’t want that God.”

But if your joy and love shine through, they start to wonder, “Why is this person so happy? Why is he always smiling, always laughing?” Maybe it takes a few years, but somewhere down the road they at least begin to contemplate what you have shown them.

You know, Baba was very quiet about what he gave people. He didn’t go around saying, “I’m a Guru. I’m going to give God to you.” He was who he was, and he did what he had to do. And just because he was who he was, people got what they had to get.

We all have our own karma. And it isn’t possible to change somebody else’s karma. No matter how much I want to help somebody, if that person has a certain

understanding, then that is what his or her understanding will be.

People doing volunteer work sometimes approach it as a mission: “I’m going to do this, and I’m going to bring about change.” A few years later, they feel disappointed because they realize, “I can’t bring about change. I can only give, and whatever can be received from my giving will be received.”

The main thing we can give others is acceptance. I don’t mean just “this is where you are, so accept it.” But loving and kind acceptance, so they can slowly learn to love and accept themselves.

In Kashmir Śaivism, there is a *sūtra* that says, “One is called a *saṃsārin*, a person of this world, who has enveloped himself in *dāridrya*.”

No good English translation exists for *dāridrya*. You can think of it as poverty of *śakti*, of energy. Being poor in *śakti* binds one to this world. The purpose of yoga is to make one rich again – not in material wealth but in spiritual grace. Until one has spiritual wealth, one will not feel uplifted.

Recently, when we were in Houston, someone shared a story about one of his partners, who wanted to do something for people living on the street. When he saw a homeless person, he would hand out his card and say, “Come to my office, I’ll give you a job.”

Nobody ever showed up.

I think that whenever we do something for others with love, we should admit we do it because it gives us joy. We can say we do it because it will make the other

Let your joy shine through (continued)

person feel happy. But ultimately we are selfish; we do it because it gives us joy. We want to see them happy because that makes us happy.

A few years ago, in Haridwar, a bunch of us were coming back from the Ganges. We saw some people begging outside a restaurant, and decided to feed them. Everyone was in line, but a few got out of the line, saying things such as “Buy me flour, I don’t eat at this restaurant” and “Give me a cup of tea, I don’t want food.”

So I said, “Wait, this is what we’re giving. If you want the food, take it. If not, find somebody else.”

One man in tattered orange robes said, “It’s cold. I need a blanket!”

It was January, so I sent one of the boys who was with me to buy the man a blanket.

He told the boy, “Follow me.”

The boy said, “No, I’m not going where you want to take me. We are going to a shop.”

So the boy took him there and bought him a blanket. Later, he saw the same man following somebody else, again begging, “Give me a blanket, give me a blanket.”

When we finished that day, as we were on our way back to the ashram, a man came running. He said, “Wait, I’m still here. I need to be fed, too!”

I said, “We’ve finished for today. I don’t have any more money with me.”

“Unless you feed me,” he said, “whatever you have given today will be zero.”

I said, “Well, too bad, I don’t buy that.” And I walked away.

The man said a few choice words, and then went off and found somebody else.

So I think, in this kind of situation, you do the best you can. You can’t feel pity. You can’t feel sad. You simply give from your heart. You make sure your intentions are clear. And that’s all you can do.

For example, if somebody is sick and keeps dwelling on “Oh, I’m so sick, I’m so sick,” what can you do? You can’t remove the person’s mind, convince it it’s not sick, and put it back into the person. In a sense, you have to learn to become indifferent.

This is a predicament I find in the work I do.

People say, “I can’t meditate.”

I say, “Try this...”

Then I see them a few months later: “I still can’t meditate.”

“Well, I told you to do this...”

“Well, that doesn’t work.”

I remember somebody who came to me with the same problem every time. I always told her the same thing because I knew that would work. If only she had tried it! The last time she came, she posed a problem and said, “And don’t tell me to do this...”

I said, “You know what you need to do.”

I never saw her again.

People get into a groove, and they get stuck in it.

**The main thing we
can give others is
acceptance.**

Let your joy shine through (continued)

Therefore, even in the work I do, I've had to learn to be indifferent. One cannot be satisfied because somebody practices and lives what one teaches. Nor can one be disappointed because somebody else doesn't.

Everybody comes for different reasons. I noticed this around Baba. Some people came because they loved to chant and meditate and do the practices. Some came and talked to him about politics or business. I would think, "You are with a great saint. Why do you want to waste your time?"

But as years went by, I realized that was all they knew, all they wanted. That was the extent of their capacity. If that was the only way they could receive grace – and if Baba was willing to listen to them – then that was fine.

Baba had great compassion. At the same time, he recognized that what he could give was limited by people's capacity.

The best example I can think of is that if you go to the ocean with a little cup, you will receive a cupful of water. If you go to the ocean with a bucket, you will receive a bucketful. Or you can throw yourself into the ocean and become part of it.

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G L O S S A R Y

dāridrya

poverty of śakti, of energy

darśanvision of the divine, experienced
in the presence of a holy being**dharma**

righteous law

Guru Gītā

commentary on the Guru

Hare Rāma, Hare Kṛṣṇa

a recitation of the name of God

japa

repetition of a mantra

Kabir

(1440-1518) poet-saint and social reformer

Kashmir Śaivisma nondual philosophy that holds
Consciousness (Shiva) alone exists**kriyā**mental or physical purification,
generated by the awakened kuṇḍalinī**kuṇḍalinī**spiritual energy dormant within all humans, can be
awakened by the Guru**sādhana**

spiritual practices

śaktithe creative energy of the universe;
the awakened spiritual energy**śaktipāt**

transmission of śakti by the Guru

saṃsārin

a person subject to the cycle of death and rebirth

sanātan

universal, eternal

satsaṅg

in the company of a knower of the Truth (saint)

sūtra

aphorism, verse

svāhā

word spoken while making offerings to a deity

