

Siddha Marg



शिवोहम्

When the mind has come to a deep experience of Śivo'ham—"I am Śiva"—that is when you have really understood what meditation is.

In that space there is nothing to become. It is a space of joy. You're happy being who you are. You don't have to do anything to please anybody else, or anything to please yourself. You just remain content, still.

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.

We Are All Light

QUESTION:

When I meditate I see a blue light, and then I disappear. I don't know if it's been five minutes or an hour; there's no awareness. Is that a lower form of *samādhi*? And what is the next step?

GURUDEV:

Often people see blue light in different forms. As Baba said, that blue light is the light of Consciousness. He suggested you to get to a place where that blue light remains steady in your experience.

QUESTION:

In my waking experience?

GURUDEV:

In all three states: waking, dream, and deep sleep. And of course in the state in which you experience the Self.

Baba's experience was that all of us are light. Therefore, we need to see that light.

Right now we experience ourselves and everything else in its gross, physical form. We don't see the light. Once in a while we get a glimpse of it. So we must bring

We Are All Light (continued)

ourselves to a deeper place within, where we always see the light.

The other day during meditation, someone fell off her chair. Everybody was concerned for a few moments, but she was fine. When I met her later, she told me she was actually the most relaxed she's ever been when it happened.

Through meditation, we can all come to that place within. Being relaxed means being at ease with ourselves. Even though we are living with ourselves at all times, most of us don't realize we aren't at ease.

How does a yogi get to that state? When we go to a place of quiet within, I think it is because we have accepted ourselves and let go of all judgments. Baba's teaching that we are all light is not about going to a place of void or emptiness. We have to go to a place you could call love or bliss.

Sometimes I wonder if it's necessary to give it a label. It's just a wonderful place in which these different experiences happen. In our limited state, we want to say, "Is this love? Is this joy? Is this bliss? Is this where the mind dissolves?"

The scriptures say, "When salt mixes in water, what is salt and what is water? They have become one."

So if I also become like that, it doesn't matter what happens to me. What matters is that I have dissolved.

QUESTION:

Totally disappear?

GURUDEV:

To some people, that's a scary thought because they have their identities. And in the place you go to, there is no identity. There's just an expanded state of Consciousness.



**All of us are light.
Therefore, we need to
see that light.**

The Point of Meditation

QUESTION:

So you say we get to this place of stillness. Is there any point to that?

GURUDEV:

Until you have experienced stillness and quietude, you wonder what it will be like.

Being still doesn't mean the world stops. The world continues. But the mind isn't filled with so many thoughts.

We grew up in the ashram, and we were taught over and over again to have as few thoughts as possible. Now I realize that so many people the world over have millions of thoughts.

I travel a lot, and I put my head on many pillows in different beds. One can feel that some pillows have a lot of thoughts. When I become aware of this, I move the pillow. And I think, "How does this individual live with so many thoughts?"

Before you even get to a place where there are no thoughts, you have to reduce, reduce, reduce, reduce, reduce.

Now you have random thoughts, thoughts with no purpose. You may wonder, "Why am I having these thoughts?"

So you go through a process of elimination. First you eliminate all erratic thoughts. You eliminate useless thoughts.

One day you come to a place of very few thoughts. And those few thoughts are useful thoughts. They are focused thoughts. As Baba would say, instead of being the servant of your mind, your mind becomes your servant.

Some people are afraid of quiet. They tell me that too much quiet is not good. You can read advertisements selling CDs for people who live in Manhattan and aren't used to silence all the time. When they go to the country, they have to take a CD of the city noise so they can sleep at night.

Baba used to tell a story about a florist and a fisherman who are friends. The florist invites the fisherman to his house to spend the day. He puts out beautiful, fragrant flowers for the fisherman to enjoy.

The fisherman comes. He's not at ease. He lies down, but he can't go to sleep. He gets a headache. So he goes to the florist and says, "You know, friend, you put out these beautiful flowers, but they are giving me a headache."

In India a fisherman has a basket covered with a gunnysack, and it has a strong smell of fish. The florist realizes his friend is used to that fish smell. So he brings him his basket and says, "Here, sleep with this next to you."

The fisherman he takes a nice, deep breath and says, "Good!" And he falls asleep.

Therefore Baba would say, "We all get used to our fragrance."

One day you come to a place of very few thoughts. And those few thoughts are useful thoughts. They are focused thoughts.

The Point of Meditation (continued)

You may not know what your fragrance is, but it is the fragrance of the mental processes you are used to. If you have a disturbed mind, you're used to your disturbed mind. You don't know what a quiet mind is. You don't know what it's like to be happy. You don't know what it's like to be peaceful. You have to allow yourself to enjoy a different fragrance.

Those of us who spent time around Baba noticed a certain fragrance that came with him. Sometimes you smelled it even before he came into the room. Over the years, many people have said it was heena, a scented oil he applied. But I came to the realization it had nothing to do with that oil. It was a fragrance he had.

I believe all of us develop a fragrance within. Until you've had that experience, you cannot understand what it is. Once you have realized a certain fragrance—whether it is bliss or peace or quiet—you don't want to live without it.

I have found in my years of travel that all successful people meditate. They don't call it meditation, because they are thinking. But each one gets up early and sits on a chair for an hour. If you ask these people what they are doing, they say, "Planning for the day." But I think they are meditating, they are focusing their thoughts.

Unsuccessful people just get out of bed and run. They don't make anything out of life because they haven't gathered their thoughts. They just run from thought to thought to thought.

So meditation is a process of elimination. You learn slowly what not to keep. You keep only that which is useful and necessary, and become free of the rest. That is the point.



You have to allow yourself to enjoy a different fragrance.

Hold Your Bliss

QUESTION:

I can be in a state of bliss, but because the body is a transmitter and receiver of energy, if I pick up someone else's negative energy, I lose that bliss. What can I do?

GURUDEV:

In the state of bliss, you are wide open. The scriptures explain that when we are wide open, when we have not closed the gates, it is easy for other energies to penetrate our aura—if that is what you want to call it.

You have to learn that when someone else or something else comes along, you may need to reduce your energy field. You may need to contain your aura within certain limits so the other's energy does not penetrate you.

You should hold the awareness of bliss within yourself, without making actual contact with that person. You are looking but not looking. By staying in that state of bliss, and not going out of it, you don't pick up the other influences.



**In the state of bliss,
you are wide open.**



Practice Has to Be Alive

QUESTION:

Is it most auspicious to chant the *Guru Gītā* in the morning? I'm not sure if it's okay to chant it in the evening.

GURUDEV:

It depends upon your life and your work schedule. If your schedule allows you to do it in the morning, that is the best time.

When you chant in a group, it takes forty to forty-five minutes. But if you do it on your own, you can do it in twenty minutes. So it doesn't take that long.

I have seen over the years that the best time for any practice is early morning. No other time is quite like 4 a.m. to 6:00 or 6:30 a.m. There's something special about nature at that time.

Once the sun has risen, the vehicles have started moving and everybody is going. It's hard to say, "Now I'm going to put in my earplugs and try to sit quietly." It's not quite the same. By then nature also has fully blossomed.

It is all a matter of adjustment. If it is easier for you, you can do your practice when you come back from work. Wash up. Take that hour, hour and a half, or two hours to practice. Then go to sleep.

The best time for any practice is early morning.

QUESTION:

What about the location?

GURUDEV:

Despite what you read in the *Guru Gītā*, I don't think it's a sin to chant it anywhere. What the sage is trying to tell you is to find a place, to find a practice. To do it, do it, do it!

They know if they scare you with sin, then you will do it. But if you read with understanding, you realize there is no such thing. It's just that to scare you into doing the practice at a particular time and place every day, this three-letter word has crept in. The worst thing about it is that you feel bad. And there's no sin worse than that.

Hopefully all of us are living the teachings, the practices, the knowledge, and all that has been imparted to us. Making that a part of our life is what is most important.

I always share that you can choose one practice, one teaching, you like. You tell yourself, "Okay, I can do this."

That is better than nothing. In fact, I would say that's wonderful because at least there's one teaching you can say you have taken, totally imbibed, practiced, and made your own. It has become real for you. Simply follow that. In your own time, when you feel ready, you will pick up something else.

For example, take Baba's message "Meditate on yourself, honor yourself, worship yourself, God dwells within you as you." You can choose any part: meditate, honor, worship, God dwells within you as you. If it is honor, you

Practice Has to Be Alive (continued)

can say, “I’ll just remember to honor, I’ll just remember to honor, I’ll just remember to honor.” Wherever you go, no matter what happens, you remember to be honorable. It becomes part of you. Whether you are awake or dreaming or sleeping, or no matter what you are doing, that teaching cannot be separated from you.

I think that’s when the practice, the teaching, the knowledge has become alive. Until then it’s only in books.

When you go back home, look through your books. I tell people, borrow a book. Because you don’t usually read the same book twice. And don’t highlight or mark in books. If something appeals to you, keep a notebook and write it there. You don’t need to write too many details. I don’t think that’s important. What is important is the teaching.

You may forget in ten years what book you read, or what sage it was, but you will always have your own notebook. You will have a record of the teaching that illuminated itself inside you. When you read it again ten years later, it will illuminate even more because you will have walked that much farther on the path.

People like to look at yearbooks. But your own notebook is the best yearbook. In it there is nothing good, nothing bad. There is nothing right, there is nothing wrong. There is just where you are today, where you were five years ago, where you were ten years ago. Some things will bring a smile when you reread them because you’ll have memories of what happened then. And you’ll realize within yourself, “I have moved along.”

Within us is a lot of memory—more memory than a computer has. I’m sure you are amazed sometimes at how much we remember. God has given us infinite terabytes.



**Choose one practice,
one teaching, you like.
You tell yourself, “Okay,
I can do this.”**

Where the Soul Goes

QUESTION:

Since I was a child, I've been curious about where we go when we die. I'm still curious. Is it *siddha loka*?

GURUDEV:

I'm sure everybody is curious.

A lady lost her ninety-three-year-old husband today. So we called to talk to her this afternoon.

She said to me, "Wherever he is, may he be well."

In *Play of Consciousness*, Baba talks about different planes of existence, which we call lokas, where the soul goes after death. The eighth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, talks about the whole process of death. It teaches us how to die, so I will begin with that.

Most people don't know there are four ways for the soul to leave the body. You might know that when some people die, they excrete. Somebody mentioned thinking these people are getting rid of dirt from the body. But actually the soul has left through the anus. It is considered the worst form of death. Such a person has not lived a good life or performed good actions.

Another way is through the mouth. In that case, the mouth will be open as the soul leaves the body. The third way is through the eyes.

The fourth way is through the *sahasrāra*, at the top of the head. Only a yogi leaves this way. The body has five types of *prāṇa*, and it takes the yogi approximately twenty to thirty minutes to gather all his *prāṇa* and then leave through the *sahasrāra*.

When somebody dies, usually the first question I ask is "How did he die? Did he suffer or did he just go?"

Sometimes people say, "Well, he had breathing issues. Or he had pain, or this and that." Some people go in their sleep. Others have a massive heart attack. Of course, you can have a heart attack, and then the doctors try to bring you back. But the best thing, as Baba used to say, is that if you think you are a yogi, then on your deathbed you prove to the world how good a yogi you are.

Within the physical body is a subtle body with nineteen limbs. The subtle body is made of light, and when the soul leaves, it travels in that body.

According to our philosophy, where we go after death depends on how we have lived upon earth. Earth is the one place where we can work out karma. If you have created good karma, you go to one of the planes Baba talked about. For a period of time, the soul, or subtle body, lives there and enjoys the pleasures of that world. When the good karma you have created is finished, once again the soul comes back onto this earth in a physical form.

It is up to us what we do with this life. I always think I can't really worry about death or what will happen to me after death. I have to be good while I live my life. If I want the time that I leave the body to be good, and my life after I leave this body to be good, I have to be good all the time.

My theory is that good actions must become constant. All thoughts must be good. All speech must be good. And I want to clarify that I don't mean superficially good. Sometimes we say, "Oh wow, that was good!" No, it should be good with depth, really good. We must feel, think, and do good not because we have to, but because it comes naturally.

On your deathbed you prove to the world how good a yogi you are.

Grace Is Always There

QUESTION:

We can do a lot of practices, but I'd like to hear more about Guru's grace.

GURUDEV:

All of these practices prepare us to tap into grace.

Grace is like the sunlight. It is always there. But right now it looks like there is no sun. It's dark. But that is simply a dark cloud over the sun. In a few moments, the cloud will be gone and the sun will shine again.

In the same way, our mind is like a dark cloud. All our doubts, all our negativities, are like clouds that cover the sun. Yoga, all the practices, everything we do here, is to make sure the clouds always go quickly.

You may feel grace is not there. But I feel grace is *always* there. All we have to do is connect with it.

This recorder is fifty percent charged. By the end of the day, it will be zero percent charged. At ten percent, it will remind me that I have to charge it. If I'm smart, I will plug it in at that point and recharge it. Then it will be ready to use again in two hours.

In the same way, every day we use our internal battery. By the end of the day, it is discharged. One way we recharge it is by sleeping. The second way is to get up and do some chanting and meditation.

Every day that you don't do your spiritual practices, your battery discharges. And you wonder why. But you just have to plug in. You have to make sure you plug in every day. Then you remain connected, you remain charged.

This is why we talk about the Guru's grace. When we stay connected to grace, we feel the Guru is always with us.

Driving here, we could see Montserrat. Whoever drives this way receives the *darśan* of the mountain. He feels connected to grace just by seeing the mountain.

If you go to old places around Europe, you find that the tallest building was always the church. No matter where you were, you could see its steeple. You could remain connected to God by looking at it. Now many buildings are taller than the church, so we must make an extra effort to go to where the temple of God is.

In the same way, when you find your means or technique of connecting with grace, use it.

Your means might be to carry your photos or music. Whenever you forget, all you have to do is turn on your music, and in a moment you are there.

Earlier, I played Baba's talk just for two minutes. You hear him, and in a moment you are in his presence. Whatever else is going on in your mind, the Guru is present.

One day somebody who works with me was going from the ashram. He was alone in his car, and he noticed he was being followed by some bad people. Just a kilometer away, two policemen stopped him and said, "Take us in your car."

He took them with him, and they told him where to drop them.

He thought to himself, "This must be Bhagavān Nityānanda and Baba." The two policemen were

When you find your means or technique of connecting with grace, use it.

Grace Is Always There (continued)

protecting him, so he felt he was in the presence of the two Gurus. He felt their grace.

Grace is always there. Of course, we have to have the eyes to see it.

Many stories try to show this. For example, a man is a big devotee of God. It's raining, and a flood is coming. As the water is rising, he prays, "God, come and protect me."

A boat comes, and the captain says, "I'll take you."

The man says, "No, no, God is coming."

The water keeps rising until he's on top of his house.

A helicopter comes and they say, "We'll throw a rope. Hold on and we'll save you."

The man says, "No, no, God is coming."

Of course, the water continues to rise, and he dies and goes to heaven. He's very angry. He says, "I prayed to you, God, and you never came!"

God says, "I sent you a boat and a helicopter. What can I do if you didn't take the help?"

We sometimes get caught in what we think is God, what we think is grace. It's there in front of us, but because it doesn't live up to our imagination, we send it away. We say, "I'll wait for my imagination of God."

We hear such a story from Bhagavān Nityānanda's life also.

A woman invites him to her house for lunch.

At that time a black dog comes to her house and goes straight to the food.

She beats him and sends him away.

When she comes to Ganeshpuri some days later, she says to Bhagavān, "You never came to my house for lunch."

He says, "Do you recall that black dog you beat and pushed away?"

The Guru tries to teach us to see God in everything. Of course, we have to be able to say, "Okay, I see You."

We were in Ganeshpuri in January, and we were sitting with an old devotee of Bhagavān.

A lady came and sat with us. She said, "I'm so happy I could come for your darśan today."

The man asked, "Why?"

She said, "My nephew is sick and I've been taking care of him. This morning I wanted to come to Ganeshpuri, so I prayed to Bhagavān to take care of him."

Immediately the man asked, "Who was taking care of him before?"

She was quiet. Because her understanding had been that she was taking care of the boy, and that Bhagavān would take care of him only until she returned.

This is the kind of shift in our understanding that needs to take place.

We need to recognize that grace is always taking care. We are just an instrument doing our job. We have to become aware of grace in our life, and be grateful for its presence.



The Guru tries to teach us to see God in everything. Of course, we have to be able to say, "Okay, I see You."

G L O S S A R Y

Bhagavad Gītā

Hindu scripture

darśan

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

dharma

righteous law

bhakta

one who follows the path of devotion

Guru Gītā

commentary on the Guru

loka

place, world

prāṇa

the life breath

sahasrāra

the crown chakra (energy center)

samādhi

union with the Absolute

sanātan

universal, eternal

satsaṅg

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

siddha

perfected master

Śiva

Hindu deity, the primordial Guru

Śivo'ham

I am Śiva