

Siddha Marg



GOD DWELLS WITHIN YOU AS YOU.

*Baba Muktānanda 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

Mahāmandaleshwar Swami Nityānanda has invited everyone to study the Guru Gītā during 2011. This issue of Siddha Marg features excerpts from four talks he gave this spring at Shanti Mandir in Walden, New York, in which he offered his commentary on this vital scripture.

Who Is the Guru?

To understand Śrī Guru Gītā, the very first thing we must do is understand what is meant by Guru. Because if we don't understand this, how can we understand the Guru Gītā, his song, which describes our relationship with him?

It is our great fortune that we have a relationship with what I'm calling here *Guru* – not *the* Guru, but *Guru*. In other words, what I am talking about is the Guru principle. The Guru principle does not exist outside of us. It is something we carry within us at all times.

Recently I visited a woman who was Baba's cook on the second and third world tours. She lived with Baba for ten years and had a close, personal relationship with him. Of course, in a big organization, when you're close to a great Guru such as Baba, many people work hard to fill the Guru's ears with wonderful stories about you.

So, they were on tour, and this woman thought she should tell Baba, “What that person in the bakery is saying about me is not the truth.”

But every time she went to Baba, he ignored her.

So she kept doing her *sevā*. And one day she thought to herself, “Does it really matter what that person is saying? Is it even important? I have my own relationship with Baba.”

Who Is the Guru? (continued)

First you must understand who the Guru is. And you must create a bond, a relationship, with the Guru.

Just as she let go of this issue in her mind, somebody came and said, “Baba wants to see you.”

When she went, Baba was sitting on his bed. And for those who don’t know Baba, he was very interesting. You never knew when you came to him what to expect.

He said to this woman, “What is Baba: a monkey or a lion?”

She just looked down. The best thing to do with Baba was not to answer him. Sometimes the wise mind has lots of things to say. But as soon as you say something, you forget that the Guru is the Guru, and he’s going to tell you what he wants to tell you anyway. This woman had been around long enough, so she kept quiet.

Baba said, “Do you know the difference between a monkey and a lion?”

She said, “No.” Because she thought, “Whatever I say, I don’t know if I’ll be right or wrong.”

Baba said, “When a monkey is shot, he covers his wound and looks down upon it. When a lion is shot, the lion looks up to see who shot him.” He said, “Baba is a lion.” That was all. He said, “You can go now.”

The woman pondered this. The realization she came to, once again, was “What does it really matter who says what?”

This is why I said first you must understand who the Guru is. And you must create a bond, a relationship, with the Guru.

I would say Gurus such as Baba are rare. And secondly, disciples who understand such Gurus are rare. I always

consider myself fortunate that I met Baba when I was a little baby. So I accepted Baba. I had parents who gave me good understanding, and I did not get viruses that disturbed it.

Viruses are of many kinds. *Sāadhanā*, *satsaṅg*, practice, study, and contemplation all serve as our antivirus, if you understand what I mean. Often we read “Check that your antivirus is up to date.” The moment a virus attacks – it could be from your satsaṅg friends, family friends, your own mind – if your antivirus software is out of date for whatever reason, a dissolution of *śraddhā*, of faith, occurs. You experience a wavering, a shaking of the mind, and wonder, “Did that Guru really say he was a lion? How does he think he’s a lion? Why not a monkey? I’m not so sure...”

Then you meet a couple more people with viruses, and you discuss with them what *they* think. Of course, their antivirus is way out of date. Their motherboard is old. Their processor is old, with not enough RAM to process. So these people shake you up even more. Yet you don’t understand exactly what has transpired.

I’m only here for five weeks, and I have to convey a lot about the Guru. I don’t want to overdose you because I am satisfied with where I am in life. My antivirus is strong. Situations in life tested me, and I feel I succeeded. That doesn’t mean viruses don’t still attack. They do. People say all kinds of things because that’s the nature of the human mind. So we must always be on guard. We must be established and settled and sure, so we don’t get shaken.

Who Is the Guru? (continued)

Verse 8 in the *Guru Gitā* says,

*Yajño vratam tapo dānam
Japas-tirtham tathaiva ca,
Gurutattvam-aviñāya
Mūḍhāste carate janāḥ.*

“You can perform *yajñas*, fire rituals. You can do austerities. You can offer in charity. You can do *japa*, mantra repetition. You can visit holy places. But until such time that you understand the Guru principle, you are like a foolish person going here and there, doing this and that.”

In our tradition, it is said the mother is the first guru. Don't think the scriptures say there is only one guru. Beginning with your mother, a guru has been important in your life. Here, however, we are talking about the Guru who frees us from our limitations, from bondage. He gives us the experience of who we really are.

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya says, “One must constantly ask oneself, ‘Who am I?’”

This contemplation must constantly take place within an individual. “Who am I? Where have I come from? Where has all of this come from?” Don't simply take for granted that “Everything is Śiva.” Know for sure everything is Śiva. Otherwise, the moment somebody attacks your faith, you'll begin to question it.



This contemplation must constantly take place within an individual. “Who am I? Where have I come from? Where has all of this come from?”

Walk the Path the Guru Has Given

**We come to satsaṅg,
to the temple, to the
ashram to find out how
we can reconnect
ourselves.**

Verse 169 of *Śrī Guru Gitā* says, *Guru-bhaktiḥ sudurlabhā*. “Devotion to the Guru is difficult.”

If we think about it, often the important ingredient missing in our lives is love. We say, “Listen to the Truth within, know the Truth within, the Truth dwells within you.” Yet often the first thing we do as humans is cut ourselves off from this inner connection. Then we come to satsaṅg, to the temple, to the ashram to find out how we can reconnect ourselves.

If you want to reconnect, I say just watch things in nature.

My favorite example is a dog. As soon as a dog knows it is loved, it simply lies down at your feet, totally trusting you will only do what is best for it. It doesn't think twice. It doesn't ask any questions. It surrenders. It bonds with you at a level we as humans don't even understand.

We had two dogs, Max and Mohini. One evening we came back from satsaṅg at about 11 pm. A woman had come with us, and we walked into the backyard, where the dogs lived. She stood and talked to me for about twenty minutes. For the whole time, Max stood between the two of us, looking at her. I even looked at him a couple of times, like, “Max, it's okay. I know her.”

Finally she said goodnight and left. And Max came and stood close to me to say whatever he wanted to say in his dog words. It probably took five or ten seconds, but in that moment it seemed like a long time. Then he went off to sleep in his dog house. I never forgot this.

When the scriptures talk about devotion, about surrender, about acceptance, we have to remember that it is not so much about anything external as it is about that to which Max was connected, that to which great sages and people who know the Truth are connected. The Truth within.

Our acceptance of a being outside ourselves only truly happens when we have accepted ourselves. Until we have accepted ourselves, we cannot accept anyone else.

This is true in any human relationship, as well. Couples may think, “I'm done with you!” But then they recall that they were in a temple or church or ashram, and said to each other, “Till death do us part.” That is a commitment each one makes within.

When I pray to my God, am I really praying to anyone else? I'm praying to myself. When we think of the Guru, is the Guru someone else? Did the *gopis* really think Kṛṣṇa was anyone other than themselves?

Verse 81 in the *Guru Gitā* says, *Jñānam vijñāna-sahitaṁ, labhyate guru-bhaktitaḥ*. “In order to have and understand devotion, we must have *jñāna*, knowledge, and *vijñāna*, direct experience.” Otherwise we're just like a puppet in whose mouth you put a hand to make it move and talk. Or a marionette, with a guy behind it pulling the strings so it can dance.

Some people live as if they were just waiting for the day they die. That's not what we want. We want life to be full.

Walk the Path the Guru Has Given (continued)

In the Indian scriptures, the sages talk about the death of the individual. Tukārām Mahārāj says, “I saw my death with my own eyes.” Baba talks in *Play of Consciousness* about experiencing his own death. A being who has allowed himself to become one with God experiences his own death. Then what remains for the rest of his life is the experience of divine Consciousness, of Truth.

We wake up in the morning and say, “I have to do this. I have to do that.” Nowadays we write notes, reminders. We put up signs. We put it online. All of a sudden that becomes our Truth.

The poet-saint Kabīr wanted initiation. But he couldn’t find a Guru. Then he heard about a great sage, Swami Rāmānanda. He decided, “I will take initiation from him.”

Of course, the people around Rāmānanda were... blah, blah, blah.

Kabīr looked into the schedule of Swami Rāmānanda, and saw that every morning at 3:00 am, Rāmānanda returned from his bath in the River Gaṅgā. Kabīr thought, “The best time to get initiation is in the dark. Swami Rāmānanda won’t know what he’s doing.”

So Kabīr went and lay down on the steps to the Gaṅgā.

Swami Rāmānanda came up after taking his bath. In the dark, he placed his foot on Kabīr. Of course, I believe Swami Rāmānanda knew. It was a divine set up, we could say. As Swami Rāmānanda realized he had placed his foot on a person, he exclaimed, “*Rām, Rām, Rām!*” And he kept walking.

Kabīr got up excited. He thought, “I’ve been touched by the Guru! I’ve received the mantra from the Guru. My job is done.”

At the same time, what was on Swami Rāmānanda’s to-do list? Just *Rām, Rām, Rām*. His reminders? *Rām, Rām, Rām*. His notes to himself? *Rām, Rām, Rām*. When he stepped on Kabīr, he didn’t think, “Let me look at my to-do list for this morning.” He automatically repeated his mantra, *Rām, Rām, Rām*.

Therefore, Kabīr and other great poet-saints say, “Rām does all the work. And I do *arām*.” *Arām* means rest. The Lord does everything. I simply rest. I don’t have to write to-do notes. I don’t have to remind myself. Simply being connected to the divine, everything else happens.

In our life today, we have forgotten what verse 81 of the *Guru Gītā* tells us: “Do only one meditation – walk on the path the Guru has given you.”

*Jñānaṁ vijñāna-sahitaṁ
labhyate guru-bhaktiḥ
Guroḥ parataraṁ nāsti
dhyeyo’sau guru-mārgibhiḥ.*

If we read it starting with the last line first, it says, “I have my focus on the path given by the Guru and walk on it, remembering there is nothing greater than the Guru. Through the devotion I have for the Guru, I will attain knowledge and direct experience.” So simple isn’t it?



**When I pray to my God,
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How Much Effort Are You Willing to Make?



One of the verses we chant in the *Guru Gitā*, verse 34, says,

*Ajñāna-timirāndhasya
jñānāñjana-salākayā,
Cakṣur-unmilitam yena
tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ.*

This usually is translated as “My eyes are filled with ignorance. The Guru with the collyrium stick of knowledge opens my eyes. Therefore, I offer salutations to the Guru.”

We can also understand the word *timirāndha* as referring to the condition of night blindness. Lord Śiva is saying a disciple has night blindness. We are blind – not physically, but blind mentally. The mind has not opened yet. When the Guru applies knowledge to our eyes, our blindness goes away.

The Guru himself does not suffer from blindness. He lives in a state of being awakened at all times. He is always present in the mantra, always experiencing God, always experiencing divinity, always experiencing Truth.

Those of us who don’t understand this say, “But wait a minute. How can you see God in that way? How can you hear mantra in that conversation?”

The Guru is simply saying, “Elevate yourself.”

We go to a doctor and say, “I have a problem.” And the doctor endorses our problem. We come away with a certificate, a written prescription, that says, yes, I have a problem.

The exact opposite happens with the Guru. We go to him and say, “I am suffering from night blindness.”

The Guru says, “No.”

We say, “Wait a minute. I have a certified paper that tells me I am suffering from night blindness.”

And he says, “No, you are *cidānanda rūpaṁ Śivo’ham Śivo’ham*.” *Cit*, I am Consciousness. *Ānanda*, I am bliss. *Śivo’ham*, I am Śiva.

The whole process of *sādhana* can be seen as a tussle between the disciple saying this is my situation, and the Guru saying, no, you are greater than that.

The last line of verse 53 in the *Guru Gitā* says,

*Prāptum tat saha-jam svabhāvam-anīṣam
sevadhvam-ekam gurum.*

Lord Śiva says the highest state “is attainable *tat saha-jam*, just naturally.” All you have to do, he says, is “go to one Guru, do his *sevā*. Serve him.”

Now, we have an issue with this. We think, “Why should I serve him? Can’t he do his own work?” Sometimes people who lived with Baba, who worked in the ashram for years, make these comments. My heart cringes because I wish that person would understand that even making such a comment in jest is not good.

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How Much Effort Are You Willing to Make? (continued)

I would like to simply state that we have been associated for a long time. We're not physically young, yet we have all put plenty of years into this process, into this path. The *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gitā*, says,

*Svalpam apy asya dharmasya
trāyate mahato bhayāt*

Svalpam means a little. Even if one has made a little bit of effort, the outcome is *mahat*, is great. So the question is "How much effort am I willing to put forth?" Each of us has to ask ourselves this question.

The other day, a man who was visiting the ashram said to his friend, "We must make it to the early morning *ārati*."

His friend asked, "Why?"

He said, "Because the *chandan*, the sandalwood paste, will be put on, and everybody will know we were at the chant."

My point is don't just say, "I went to the chant!" Ask yourself, "How much of me was actually there?" We can say, "I love the Guru. I respect the Guru. I honor the Guru. I do all these things." But then we have to ask ourselves, "How much of this do I really feel within myself?"

As we study the *Guru Gitā*, we realize that the first thing is bhakti, devotion; is love; is this welling up of feeling. Before mantra, before *kuṇḍalinī* awakening, before knowledge, we must have devotion. Only then can mantra, *kuṇḍalinī*, and knowledge bear fruit.

That love is unconditional. It has no questions. It is simply love. Imagine a mother and child – a good mother and child. During the first two or three years, the child

isn't able to speak. He can't share or express himself. Yet the mother simply loves that child. And the child responds in his own way. This is the feeling we need to carry with us throughout *sādhana* and life.

I often think about the time in 1981 when I went with Baba to visit the shrine of his Guru, Bhagavān Nityānanda, in Ganeshpuri. I'd been with him many times over the years, but then I went as Swami Nityānanda, as his successor. I was trying to absorb and learn from him about Guru bhakti, the Guru, the role, and so on.

As we walked into the shrine, the first thing Baba did was a full prostration. He rolled over three times this way. He rolled over three times back to the center. He rolled over three times to the right. He rolled over three times back to the center.

Now, imagine me, just nineteen-plus years of age. I had seen Baba worshiped by thousands around the globe, all kinds of people. The first thought I had was "This is bhakti." The second was "This is humility." It didn't matter to Baba that those of us with him could see he was being humble.

Many people prefer to express their devotion in private because they don't want everybody to see. Sometimes people *praṇām* here and say, "My knee hurts. My back hurts. My head hurts." I think it's the heart that hurts.

I still carry the image of Baba rolling one way and the other way. That kind of *praṇām* is a tradition in South India, especially Tamil Nadu. Sometimes the sanctum sanctorum is too small, so one cannot *praṇām* inside. People *praṇām* in two ways, as far as I know. If the temple has a courtyard, they go around the courtyard

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How Much Effort Are You Willing to Make? (continued)

rolling. Men do it. Women do it. Some temples are so busy there's no space in the courtyard. In that case, depending on the degree of their devotion, people roll around on the outside.

Now, you may think, "It's dirty. It's black. It's this, it's that."

Most ancient Indian temples have a water tank. One always bathes in it before entering the temple. In some South Indian temples, it's so hot that one's cloth dries by the time one reaches the deity. Nevertheless, many people roll on the ground wearing a wet cloth.

We sit here and in our imagination go, wow! But I think, "Such devotion, such simplicity, such humility, such surrender, such offering."

I would like to suggest that as we study the *Guru Gitā*, we appreciate exactly what we do. Don't take lightly whatever action you perform. Don't make jest of it, and don't make jest of others. Think with depth.

I'm not telling you not to be humorous. I have a sense of humor. At the same time, think of what should be considered funny, and what should be held so dear that we don't want to make a joke of it to ourselves or to others. Because we want *sādhana* to bear fruit.

The sages and the scriptures do not tell us to be serious and uptight. They tell us to be full of joy. I don't want you to walk around thinking, "Swami Nityānanda told us not to smile." Always be filled with joy. Never have a moment where you're not joyous.

I have a great time walking on the rail trail. I try to make contact with every single person I come across. Yesterday the sun was bright, so many people had sunglasses on. I thought, "How wonderful: when you don't want to meet somebody, wear sunglasses." Because I know they're looking at me. Yet when I smile and say hello, they don't respond. Of course, they have their iPod, also. So as far as they're concerned, they never saw me, they never heard me.

This is what so many of us do all through life. We wear our sunglasses. We wear our iPods. I don't think it's necessary. It's so much fun to walk the rail trail – or whatever it is in life – without sunglasses. That's exactly what the *Guru Gitā* means when it says the Guru removes *timirāndha*, our blindness.



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Prostrate Fully

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here is a verse in *Śrī Guru Gītā* that I've often contemplated. It's verse 28.

*Karmaṇā manasā vācā
Nityam-ārādhayed gurum,
Dirgha-daṇḍaṁ namaskṛtya
Nirlajjo gurusannidhau.*

Lord Śiva tells Pārvatī how to worship the Guru: *Karmaṇā manasā vācā*. "Through action, through thought, through speech."

Instead of thinking, "I perform actions for myself, for an outcome I would like," we must allow ourselves to understand that all our actions are for the Lord. It means a shift in the reason for our actions, and it means our actions have to become good. What would you do for the Lord? Nothing but the best.

We express actions through the body, but actions actually begin in the mind. The seed is in the mind. If I'm at peace, then what I speak, what I do, what I carry with myself is peaceful. If I feel irritated, then what goes out is irritation.

Śiva tells Pārvatī to become aware that worship of the Guru is not just at one particular time of the day. Through all our actions, thoughts, and speech we can be constantly worshipping the Guru. I think it's a great teaching. Our actions can become beautiful, like a dance. Our speech can become pleasing, like music. And all of this begins with the mind.

Śiva says, *Dirgha-daṇḍaṁ namaskṛtya*. When you go up to the Guru, allow yourself to fully prostrate. When we prostrate, we all have our inhibitions. We have limitations our mind creates. Simply allow yourself to become totally humble and open. Look within your own self, look into your own heart.

Ask yourself: "To whom am I actually prostrating?" If the individual to whom you are is established in the state of oneness, does it really matter to that being whether you prostrate or not?

Lord Śiva says, *Nirlajjo gurusannidhau*. "Be near to the Guru without having any shame." When you come in front of the Guru, of God, the Truth, the Self, don't hide. Because, as I often ask, when we run away, from whom are we really running? We only run away from ourselves.

When we come to satsaṅg, and hear what we hear in satsaṅg, all we really face is ourselves. Because satsaṅg is not about anyone else, but us.

The whole *Guru Gītā* is not about anyone else but ourselves. There is no Guru who is other. There is no Śiva who is other. There is no Pārvatī who is other. All this is within ourselves. Śiva is within us. Śakti, as Pārvatī, is within us.

The conversation between Śiva and Pārvatī is really between the Lord within us and that divine energy within us, the Guru within us. So to whom am I doing all of these things? No one but myself.

The whole *Guru Gītā* is not about anyone else but ourselves. There is no Guru who is other. There is no Śiva who is other. There is no Pārvatī who is other. All this is within ourselves.

Prostrate Fully (continued)

This verse teaches us surrender. It teaches us to allow ourselves to let go and become aware of our actions, speech, and thoughts.

So as you go about your daily activities, think about this. Think about what thoughts are coming constantly into your mind. Ask yourself how you can make those thoughts uplifting to yourself, and thus uplifting to others.

Now, you may not think your thoughts are felt by others. But the energy those thoughts create goes with you. When you speak, think of being musical. Don't speak in a sing-song tone, but let it be joyous.

I'll end with a short story. A deaf man looks into a room through its window. Everybody is moving and swinging and swaying. Of course, he can't hear anything. So he thinks to himself, "These are mad people."

The sage says, "Because he's deaf and can't hear the music to which you are dancing, he thinks you are mad."

In the same way, we're all dancing to a tune. We don't always need an iPod to listen to a tune. There is a tune playing within at all times. So make that tune enjoyable.

Don't carry sad, long faces. Smile. It doesn't take much effort.

As soon as you get worried, smile. If your friend or spouse or family member looks worried, smile. Of course, these people will think you're crazy because they are worried and you're smiling. Tell them worrying won't help the problem go away. Has worrying ever made your problems go away? But smiling helps. The problem is still there, but mentally it loses effect.

Try it. I can't guarantee what others may think of you. But what they think isn't as important as how you feel about yourself. When you feel good, you are able to love yourself. This was Baba's message: "Meditate on yourself, honor yourself, worship yourself, respect your own Self, God dwells within you as you."



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G L O S S A R Y

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya
(788-820) philosopher of nondualist Vedānta

āratī
waving of lights to worship a deity

bhakti
devotion

gopīs
devotees of Kṛṣṇa

Guru Gītā
commentary on the Guru

japa
repetition of a mantra

jñāna
knowledge

Kabīr
(1440-1518) poet-saint and social reformer

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

praṇām
prostration

sādhana
spiritual practices

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

śraddhā
faith

sevā
work offered as service to the Guru

timirāndha
ignorance, blindness

Tukārām
(1608–1650) poet-saint

vijñāna
direct experience

yajña
fire ritual