

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

STUDY OF ŚRĪ GURU GĪTĀ: FOUR DISCOURSES

Mahāmandaleshwar Swami Nityānanda has invited everyone to study the Guru Gītā during 2011. This special issue of Siddha Marg features excerpts from four discourses given at Shanti Mandir in Walden, New York. Each teacher takes a different approach to the study of this scripture. Please use these examples to inspire your own study.

The One Indispensable Text

BY DANA WILKINSON

In 1971, Baba Muktānanda had a *mūrti*, an enlivened statue, of his Guru, Bhagavān Nityānanda, installed in the temple, just inside the entrance of the Ganeshpuri Ashram. In India, every organization, every ashram, every family has its *iṣṭa devatā*, its chosen personal deity. Baba said many times that the Guru was his deity.

The following year, Baba made *Śrī Guru Gītā* the main chanting text for his ashrams. At that time, the *Bhagavad Gītā* was chanted each morning in the ashram. From that point on, the *Guru Gītā* was recited instead. I think by installing Bhagavān and installing the *Guru Gītā*, Baba was putting the emphasis on the Guru. The Guru is the source of our inspiration, and the *Guru Gītā* is the core scripture of this yoga. By chanting it, we access the source from which everything comes to us in *sādhana*, as we do our spiritual practices.

I remember when we were in the Oakland Ashram, around 1975, and Baba wanted to record the *Guru Gītā*. He orchestrated everything very carefully from his seat –

The One Indispensable Text (continued)

The mind needs something to focus on, so we use a scripture, a book of wisdom. As the mind studies and contemplates the teachings and becomes more absorbed in them, it slowly withdraws itself from its fascination with external things.

– Swami Nityānanda

how he wanted it to be, where he wanted everybody to sit, and the musicians and everything. And at the end of the recording, he was very happy. He said, “This is our *Guru Gitā*. Many people will chant the *Guru Gitā*, but this is Baba’s *Guru Gitā*.”

The *Guru Gitā* comes from a longer scripture, the *Skanda Purāṇa*. Verse 182 of the *Guru Gitā*, the last verse, tells us this when it says *iti Śrīskandapurāṇe*. I know some people have looked for the *Guru Gitā* within the *Skanda Purāṇa* and did not find it. But you have to consider that these Vedic teachings were a collection of mythological stories that was passed on orally for thousands of years. Over time, some parts were lost. Eventually what we now know as the *Skanda Purāṇa* was gathered and written down, but it didn’t include the *Guru Gitā*. However, that isn’t to say the *Guru Gitā* did not come from it originally.

The *Guru Gitā* is a *stotra*, a hymn that has been set to a melody and rhythm, and is intended to propitiate a particular deity. There are *stotras* to Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Lakṣmi – to every deity. A *stotra* is considered easy to chant and accessible to everyone. By reciting it, we are approaching the deity. We are asking for something. As someone who has a desire for liberation, you may go to the deity with that desire. Or maybe you want something worldly, such as children or wealth. In fact, as you will see when you study it, everything is promised to you if you recite the *Guru Gitā*.

How we approach the deity is important. We want to have reverence, devotion, the appropriate language, and the right attitude, so we can get in contact with the deity.

In his introduction to the text, Baba advises us not to be lazy in chanting and reciting sacred texts. He says we should approach the deity every day at the same time, with the same reverence. Of course, what we are asking for may get more refined, and our devotion may get more defined.

Each time you repeat the *stotra*, you can think of it as making a deposit. You are depositing your devotion and you are gaining more devotion and more purity. As Gurudev has said, people who maintain their *sādhana* and chant with regularity develop a certain richness of being, a radiance. We make an investment through chanting, but the return we receive isn’t necessarily instant. We want something from the deity, but the deity also wants something from us. We have to give a lot and we have to give it regularly. In essence, we give our smallness, and in return we get back our greatness.

When we chant the *Guru Gitā*, as its verses tell us, we should sit in a clean place, in a perfect or an easy posture, without moving or looking around. Normally, our minds are all over the place; we are multitasking all the time. So instead we keep the mind focused. We hold the book in our right hand, with our left hand on our left knee. Both eyes are focused on the text and the ears are attuned to the neighboring voices as well as our own.

Such a practice includes mastery of the posture, gazing at a fixed point, and one-pointedness of mind. This is concentration of a high order because all our mental energy is collected and directed toward the mantras – both reciting and hearing them. As we do this, we can enjoy the flow of love released by the mantras.

The One Indispensable Text (continued)

Various saints have talked about the blessings they received, not just from chanting sacred texts but from the fact that they were able to enjoy the mantras, enjoy God's name. Many people hear chanting, or even engage in it themselves, but don't enjoy it. So if you love to chant, that in itself is a great blessing. When you have love for chanting, it becomes an addiction, and then all other addictions fall away.

Of course, any chanting is great, but chanting the *Guru Gītā* is the greatest. Baba once said that if anyone asked him if there is one indispensable text, he would say the *Guru Gītā*.

Truly speaking, the *Guru Gītā* is a mysterious text. It is said that when we chant stotras, such as the *Guru Gītā*, many things are revealed to us. Spiritual concepts can be understood intellectually, but the intellect can take us only so far. So if you come up against a block in your understanding, just continue to practice, continue to chant, and see what is shown to you.

The secrets of the Guru-disciple relationship are revealed in the *Guru Gītā*. It explains who and what the Guru is. It tells us how a disciple should behave, and what we can gain through a relationship with the Guru. It also talks about the nature of Consciousness and the nature of the world, individuality, bondage, and liberation. Ultimately, it talks about recognizing our oneness with the Guru. The purpose of the Guru is to transform us from a mere disciple into one who lives in the same state as the Guru.



**We can read a scripture,
but there is more to it
than that. In the light of
what we have read, we
need to look at
ourselves with a
magnifying glass, to
examine our thoughts
throughout the day. We
need to put forth this
effort constantly.**

– Swami Nityānanda

Seek the Guru Within

BY VIVEK DESAI

Sri *Guru Gītā* is a dialogue that occurs between Suta and other sages. Within it, Suta narrates a dialogue between Lord Śiva and Pārvatī. You have to imagine the scene. It takes place on Mount Kailas, where there is nothing but silence.

With total humility, Pārvatī approaches her master, Lord Śiva, and says, “Please have compassion on me and tell me how a limited individual can expand to include everything.”

Pārvatī comes here as a seeker. Every seeker has an awakening at some point, and to some degree comes to the understanding “I have to know the Absolute because that is where true happiness lies.” And so Pārvatī asks, “By which path can I obtain this knowledge?”

An analogy often used is that of a map. When you have a map, and you want to go somewhere, the first thing you do is set your destination, your goal. If you just jump in the car, you have no idea where you’re going. But once you know your destination, then the question is “What route can I take to reach my goal?” (In Sanskrit, the goal is known as *sādhya*, the individual is known as *sādhaka*, and the whole process is known as *sāadhanā*.)

As seekers we must realize, “I can’t find peace of mind in the outer world because it exists within me, and therefore I should continually focus on the inner goal.” This intense desire to reach the goal of liberation is known as *mumukṣutva*. It is likened in the scriptures to a person whose entire body is on fire and who wishes for nothing

other than coldness. When we hear stories about great beings who achieved this goal, we see they all had this intense desire for liberation.

So this question is asked by Pārvatī, who has all the characteristics of a true seeker. And Lord Śiva answers in the next verse: “O Goddess, you are my very Self, and out of love for you I will reveal this knowledge to you. The Absolute is nothing other than the Guru.”

He tells her that her question is a boon to all humanity because its answer reveals the ultimate knowledge, which will end all seeking and all restlessness. He says this knowledge is difficult to obtain in all the three worlds because it is the highest knowledge. There is nothing beyond this. And what is this knowledge? It is that the highest principle, the Absolute, is nothing other than the Guru.

What is the Guru? Lord Śiva links the Absolute, God, and the Guru. He says the Absolute is the same as the Guru. And then the Lord says, “The Guru is not different from your conscious Self.” He continues, “Therefore, a wise man should make an effort to seek his Guru.”

This is the essence of all spiritual teachings. In fact, the entire *Guru Gītā* is a commentary on this teaching: the Absolute, the Guru, and the Self are three manifestations of one principle. Lord Śiva is saying that you (the seeker) are asking me for the highest knowledge, but that which you are seeking is actually within you.

Seek the Guru Within (continued)

You do not need to seek God somewhere else. He dwells within you as you. So whoever you are, whatever you are, however you are at this moment, simply turn your gaze within. Look at what has been given to you by the Lord. And thus become content within yourself.

– Swami Nityānanda

If we go back to the map analogy, we see it is not a perfect analogy because we are at one place on the map, but the Guru is saying, “Your destination is right where you are.” This perspective has been likened to a circle with “center everywhere, circumference nowhere.”

The Guru always brings us back to ourselves by saying the highest principle exists within us, and that is what we should seek. The Guru is the embodiment of that principle, so he is both outside and also within us. The knowledge we are seeking is not something new and different. We already have it. It’s just that we have to become aware of it.

Our true nature is Consciousness. We can never be separated from Consciousness. The Guru says our true nature is not the body. It is closer than the body. It is not the mind, either. It is more immediate than the mind. Nor is it our breath, but we can use the breath to go to it because it is closer than the breath. It is closer even than our sense of limited “I.” What is prior to the sense of limited “I”? The scriptures say we cannot think about That because it is the power that makes us think.

We can never be not conscious. Contemplate this. Even when you say, “I was not conscious in my sleep,” how do you know? There was consciousness of not being conscious. The very definition of who you are is being conscious. It is the pure I-awareness. Śaivism calls it *aham vimarśa*. This pure awareness is beyond thought.

In this verse of the *Guru Gītā*, the Lord says the Guru is not different from the conscious Self. He says that which you feel inside of yourself as “I” is the Guru. So hold onto that. This is the answer to Pārvatī’s question. She wants to know how a limited individual can attain the state of

the Guru, and in response, Śiva is saying, “You are That.” You are that which is called Brahman – which has no name and no form, but all names and forms are its play.

We identify ourselves with a particular name and particular form, and so we limit ourselves. The Lord is saying, “Go closer. Ask, ‘Who am I without a name? Who am I without a form?’” In deep sleep there is no form. After death there is no form. Before birth there is no form. But we know that, so there is consciousness of the absence of name and form. We must go to that consciousness because it is one with the eternal principle.

If we look at this dialogue, it is between Śakti (who is Pārvatī) and Śiva. And Śakti is never different from Śiva. So it is a play. Śakti has become a limited individual and is asking this question. But basically Śiva is saying, “You already are the Absolute.”

This is why Baba always said, “Meditate on your Self. God dwells within you as you.” Because who is really doing the seeking? When I seek something, it is “I” who is seeking. And what is the Absolute? It is “I.” What is the Guru? It, too, is “I.” So this is the answer Lord Śiva gives: seek the Guru within.



Through Guru's Grace

BY UMESH NAGARKATTE

In August 1972, my wife Chitra and I met Baba Muktānanda in the Ganeshpuri Ashram. During that first meeting with him, we received śaktipāt. We experienced spontaneous meditation, but we didn't know what it was because there was nobody around to explain what was happening.

Two years later, Baba came to the old Russian school on 91st Street in Manhattan, and we learned that we had received śaktipāt, the awakening of kuṇḍalinī, the spiritual energy dormant within all humans. We started attending the morning program there regularly. We were living in Union City, New Jersey, and we'd get up at 4:30 am and drive to the ashram. We always found a parking space nearby.

The morning program consisted of meditation, breakfast, the *Guru Gitā*, and the *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* chant. It was very lively. Baba made the breakfast himself, and in the middle of the meditation, he would walk through the people to get to his chair. Whenever he passed you, it was like a live electric current passing by.

For a seeker, kuṇḍalinī awakening opens up another dimension. Compared with normal waking consciousness, you can think of it as the difference between driving and flying. People have different experiences as they undergo the cleansing of the physical and subtle bodies. This sādhanā is individualized instruction. It is not group instruction. We work with the Guru, and he gives us what is right for us. And he lifts us from wherever we are.

Once during the *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* chant, I saw an equilateral triangle in my head, with its apex pointing toward the forehead, and two feet in the middle wearing red socks. Baba used to wear red socks at that time. The next day, my attention was drawn to verse 58 of the *Guru Gitā*:

*Akathādi-trirekhābje
sahasradala-maṇḍale,
Haṁsa-pārśva-trikoṇe ca
smaret tanmadhya-gaṁ gurum.*

It says, "Remember the Guru in the middle of the triangle in the *sahasrāra*." The triangle is formed by the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, starting with *a*, *ka*, and *tha*, at each corner. The sahasrāra is the *chakra*, or spiritual center, located at the top of the head. But that day I saw only the triangle and Baba's two feet. After few years I saw the full Sanskrit alphabet.

Once we took an Intensive with Baba, and about a thousand people were present. Baba went around with his wand of peacock feathers giving śaktipāt, and when he came to Chitra, he dropped his feathers and held both his hands on her head. She felt so much pressure that it seemed as if he were putting his feet on her head. She saw the triangle, as described in the *Guru Gitā*, with the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet and the Guru's *pādukās*, his sandals, in the middle of the triangle. She saw Baba's form pervading her entire body. Then his form reduced to thumb size and sat in the middle of her heart.

Through Guru's Grace (continued)

Before that, Chitra used to long for a vision of the Guru's pādukās in meditation. Now she heard Baba saying, "Why do you want the pādukās when I am giving myself totally to you?" Thus, through Guru's grace, she experienced the meaning of the *Guru Gitā*.

The *Guru Gitā* describes how to meditate on the Guru. Verse 91 tells us to "meditate on the Guru, seated in the heart lotus, who holds the book of Consciousness in one hand and blesses us with the other." Similar mention is given in verse 115, which says,

*Aṅguṣṭha-mātra puruṣaṁ
dhyāyataś-cinmayam hṛdi,
Tatra sphurati bhāvo yaḥ
śṛṇu taṁ kathayāmyaham.*

This sacred text is telling us that it is not the Guru – not the man, not the physical body – we worship. Our object of worship is that Consciousness which is everywhere, in itself wholly aware, unlimited in time and space.

– Swami Nityānanda

Here Lord Śiva tells Pārvatī, "When you meditate on the thumb-sized being in the heart, a state arises about which I'll tell you." And then he describes the state of liberation.

The *Guru Gitā* instructs us to transcend the body by knowing we are Consciousness. It is the Guru who gives us this understanding. The Guru is the Self incarnated as a human being to make our self-constricted, individual consciousness, or ego, merge with the inner Self, or divine Consciousness.



Nothing Higher than the Guru

BY NITYESHWARI BORDOY

One of my favorite verses in the *Guru Gitā* is verse 168, which talks about unity Consciousness, or the experience of oneness. It says,

*Eko deva ekadharma
eka-niṣṭhā param tapah
Guroḥ parataram nānyan-
nāsti tattvaṁ guroḥ param.*

The words *eko deva* translate as “one God.” This verse is saying we worship only one God, not many gods. Now, you may have heard it said that Hinduism has 33,000 gods. And if you’re Catholic, you are familiar with many saints. So how do we reconcile these many forms with one God? I think we have to reach the understanding that while there may be many forms, there is only one divinity. And that one divinity takes on all those forms. When it contracts from the formless Absolute into a perceivable form, it becomes Viṣṇu, Śiva, Kṛṣṇa, or another form. So this verse is telling us that even though we might say, “I’m a devotee of Kṛṣṇa,” we can’t exclude all other forms of the divine. We must see everything as one Consciousness.

The same applies to *ekadharma*, meaning one dharma. Dharma can be understood as righteousness, or right way of living. So the *Guru Gitā* is saying there is only one true dharma, one right way for us to live. If we follow the dharma of a particular culture, we may find that what is considered correct in the U.S., for example, is different from what is considered correct in Mexico or in India or

in other countries. So how can we know how to always do the appropriate thing? I believe we have to follow the heart. The heart will lead us to our true dharma.

Also, I think, this understanding expands our tolerance. When we embrace our own true dharma, it is easier to see and accept what is right for others, even if we don’t necessarily understand it. We don’t have to like it. We can just embrace everything and enjoy the variety of life.

Niṣṭhā refers to that which we have faith in, to which we are devoted. The *Guru Gitā* says we should have firm devotion or dedication to one thing only. But again, we can’t be devoted to just one thing and exclude all others. So what I think it is speaking about is the underlying nature of everything.

In Mexico City we have a tower that is said to be the tallest building in the world. You probably think, no, there’s a taller one someplace else. But Mexico City is 7,350 feet above sea level. So we can say that makes it the tallest. And when you go inside, you find each floor has something interesting. There’s a famous aquarium on one floor, and a museum about the revolution on another. Near the top there’s a restaurant that spins. And when you get to the roof, you have a view of the whole city.

I think in *sādhana* we do the same. We go to one floor and think, “I’m feeling so much peace. I want to stay here.” But the Guru always encourages us to keep pushing the button, so we can discover what’s on the next floor.

Nothing Higher than the Guru (continued)

The difference between an ordinary human being and one established in the state of oneness is that the Guru is a master of his mind, not its slave. The Guru's mind is always focused on divinity, not distracted or disturbed by whatever is going on around him.

– Swami Nityānanda

Finally when we reach the top, we have full view of what life is and can be.

So our faith has to be focused on the highest. We cannot just stop anywhere.

The next word is *param*, which means the greatest, the highest. And *tapah* is heat. This refers to the heat of spiritual practice. When you're cooking, you need heat. And a train needs steam, right? So we need this heat, this *tapah*, in our spiritual practices. It is what allows us to make progress. It burns our limitations and keeps us moving on. So the highest practice is to have one God, one dharma, and one faith so we can attain what we wish to attain.

The next line, *Guroḥ paratarām nānyan*, tells us there is no experience higher than the state of the Guru. When we are in that experience – and we have all had at least a glimpse – then there's nothing more that we want. There's nothing we feel we need. It's the experience of complete fullness. So this verse says we must become one with that state.

On Mexican television there is a talent show, and they interviewed one of the dancers and asked her, "What do you think about when you're dancing on your toes?" She made a face and said, "How can I think? I am the music. When I'm dancing, there is no me. I just disappear in it." When I heard that, it made me choke because I felt, Wow, that's so spiritual, even if it doesn't sound like it. But when we experience oneness, there is no difference between what we see as worldly and as spiritual.

So it is important to reach that unity of Consciousness. Otherwise we will always experience some degree of duality. Even the brightest light, or the brightest sun or

star, always casts a shadow, right? So in order to not have this shadow, we have to become one with that light.

The last line says *nāsti tattvaṁ guroḥ param*. This speaks about the *tattvas*, which describe the intrinsic nature of things. Kashmir Śaivism says there are thirty-six *tattvas*, the lowest being the elements of physical creation, and the highest being the union of Śiva and Śakti, or transcendent oneness.

Saint Teresa of Avila was a Spanish saint, my favorite. One day one of the nuns with whom she lived came to her and said, "Mother, I cannot meditate or contemplate. My mind is going crazy."

Saint Teresa asked her, "What do you love most?"

The nun said, "I love the cat so much."

Saint Teresa said, "Then meditate on the cat." She told the nun to meditate on the catness of the cat, and by realizing its intrinsic nature she would realize the intrinsic nature of all things.

This verse tells us there is no higher intrinsic nature than that of the Guru. And I think every verse of the *Guru Gitā* reveals the essence of the Guru – much as when you go to the ocean, you only need to take one glass of seawater to know the essence of the sea. And yet I find it's been wonderful to study the *Guru Gitā* in such a systematic manner because we not only get the experience of bliss in our heart, but we also nourish our intellect.

