

Siddha Marg



लोकानन्दः समाधिसुखम्

When you first hear “the bliss of the world is the bliss of samādhi,” you ask yourself, “How can external enjoyment be the same as immersion within?”

But the scriptures say we must come to realize that the joy we are experiencing doesn't come from the object, it comes from within ourselves. Therefore, you can have a thrill, you can have joy. But the awareness is that it comes from within.

MAHĀMANDALESHWAR SWAMI NITYĀNANDA

The purpose of Siddha Marg is to communicate the teachings of Mahāmandaleshwar Swami Nityanānda 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.

Never Miss a Day

QUESTION:

How do I start my spiritual practices again if I have stopped for some time? What is the most elegant or efficient way?

GURUDEV:

Never let go of the daily practices. Even on the worst day, when you really don't feel like doing the practices, make yourself do them. The day you miss them once is the day they are gone.

Then you say, “Well, I missed yesterday, but that's okay, I'll start tomorrow.”

But tomorrow never comes.

Never miss one day. If you can't do your practice in the morning, do it in the evening. If you can't do it in the evening, do it in the morning. But do it.

At times, I've been like that with exercise. I started, I stopped. I started, I stopped. If I missed it for one day, it could be days or months before I got back into it. I would tell myself, “I'll wait for summer. Winter is too cold.” But when summer came, I thought, “I'm so busy, I just don't have time.”

Never Miss a Day (continued)

Now, that never happened with spiritual practices. Perhaps this was because of Baba. The fear of God was there, and also the experience of joy. I always made sure I did the practices—not because I had to, but because of the joy in doing them.

After bathing in the morning, I always do my *pūjā* and meditation. It comes naturally. That's the advantage of a routine. When the time arrives, the mind automatically goes in that direction.

Tiredness is usually the cause of the days we skip our spiritual practices. The body feels totally exhausted. Perhaps there are other reasons, too. But on those days especially, we must do the practice, even if only for a few minutes.

If you have to, you can do a shortened version of what you would normally do. Or you can sit for fifteen, twenty minutes and do nothing before you get into the practice you wish to do. Figure out for yourself what works for you.

Once you create self-discipline and make it part of your life, it stays with you.



If you can't do your practice in the morning, do it in the evening. If you can't do it in the evening, do it in the morning. But do it.

The Best Redemption

QUESTION:

What should you do if you've done something you know isn't right or made a terrible decision? I know the first thing is, okay, resolve to not let it happen again. But still, there are all the things you've created, all the people you might have hurt. What's the best way to redeem yourself?

GURUDEV:

I think the fact that you've just realized what you've done is the best redemption.

If you go around and try to clarify what you've done, you only risk getting into more trouble. I mean, it gets silly if you try to go up to each and every person and say, "I am sorry, I shouldn't have done that."

Then he or she says, "What did you do?" The person doesn't even know what you are saying you're sorry for.

Of course, it depends on what the situation is. But if it's just a small thing that happened, and if you feel the other person would understand, you can explain what you've realized. Otherwise, you just have to trust that universal Consciousness will take care of it.

Every day, we pray in the *Āratī*,

*yad-akṣaram padam bhraṣṭam
mātrā-hīnam ca yad bhavet
tat sarvaṁ kṣamyatām deva
prasīda parameśvara*

We ask the Lord, "Please forgive me for whatever I have done that I was not aware of."

When we recite that prayer, I see some fold their hands, others close their eyes. There's an awareness that, "I've done many things today. Some I know were good. Some I know were bad. Some I don't know what they were. But I ask for Your forgiveness."

So each day, at the end of the day, when you are in the temple, or before you go to bed, just say, "Okay. Thank you. Sorry. Good night." As you do that, slowly you come to a place within yourself where you are aware that your actions, even those unconsciously performed, have become better and better and better.



**We ask the Lord,
"Please forgive me for
whatever I have done
that I was not aware of."**

Break That Cycle

QUESTION:

I'm happy when I'm on the spiritual path. Then something gets in my way and I decide I don't want to do it anymore. Yet something inside tells me that is not the way, and I go back again. Sometimes it feels like trying to struggle through bad memories from my past life.

GURUDEV:

I think what you are saying is probably applicable for everybody. Each one has his own struggle. Whichever way you get to it—I don't want to say “by hook or by crook” because we always want to try the good way—but whichever way you are able to get to it is fine.

Whatever you do, do it regularly. Do it daily. Don't allow the mind to control you so much by judging “I'm good” or “I'm bad.”

What you need to bring about is a balance. For example, you are so passionately into your meditation that the *śakti* gets roused very wildly. So find a balance whereby you're not so into it today and then not into it at all tomorrow. Break that cycle.

What you need to bring about is a balance.



Be Who You Are

QUESTION:

I do meditation. I feel good about my life. And then I have the outside influences of the news of the world, and powerlessness creeps in. I take care of myself; I teach by talking to people. But is there anything else?

GURUDEV:

One of the conclusions I've come to, especially since 9/11, is that we, as people who are like-minded, need to do more through talking, through being fearless. We think our whole focus as yogis is inward. But one thing I love about yoga is that it teaches us how to operate from the inner to the outer. Then, wherever we go, we can bring that peace with us and share it with others.

So the question arises, have we actually made the world better? How are things different?

I think we have to get out there and do more.

It's not that nothing has come from what you're already doing, or that nothing will come from it. But the more of us who make these efforts, the greater will be the effect.

That doesn't necessarily mean becoming an activist, or becoming crazy in some way. Sometimes I cringe when people on the spiritual path use such flowery terms: "Become soft! Become gentle!" Just be who you are!

Sometimes we make ourselves so proper, and we try to appear so normal. There is an American named Krishna Das who does kirtan. We were very excited the other day because he was selected as a Grammy nominee. He always wears a t-shirt and a flannel shirt. Always. When we heard he was going to perform at the Grammys, we wondered if he was going to wear his signature t-shirt and flannel shirt.

And that's what he wore. He didn't wear a tuxedo. He didn't wear a tie. He didn't wear a jacket. He just went as himself.

It probably took a lot of courage and chutzpah. People around him must have said, "You can't go like that. You'll look like a fool." But he had to say to himself, "This is who I am. This is how I'm going to be."

Sometimes a child will see me in the airport or in the grocery store and say, "Mommy, why is the man wearing a skirt?"

If I hear that, I take the opportunity to smile back at the mother, to show that I'm not a weird or strange or alien creature. To show "I'm just like you, but I've chosen to do something else."

If they are close enough, I quickly say, "I'm from India. I'm a monk. I'm a swami."

They say, "Okay."

They might go home and look up what swami means. But at least the ignorance and fear have been lessened in the parent's mind.

As you said, we can talk to people. And we can do other things, too. For example, you can hold the door open for the person behind you. You don't have to act as if you don't see that he or she is behind you.

People think, "If I'm nice, they will wonder what's wrong with me." Nothing! Let them reciprocate your nicety.

Often people say, "*They* are doing it." Or "*They* aren't doing it."

My question is "Who are *they*?" They're not aliens. They're not people who came from just anywhere. They are simply people we have alienated from us because we haven't learned how to love them.

Yoga teaches us how to operate from the inner to the outer.

Be Who You Are (continued)

I was just reading a book by an American swami. He shares a letter from a young Indian girl in Malaysia. She was getting ready to commit suicide. But she wrote to this swami before attempting it. When the swami received the letter, he contacted her and her parents. I'm sure the swami felt good that he was able to stop that suicide. The girl wanted her letter shared so it could help other people who are feeling the same way.

I think oftentimes we don't know how to reach out when we are in trouble ourselves. And we don't know what to do to help a person who is in trouble.

In society today, we have put on so many layers. At some point, certain people get fed up and snap. This anger is what we've been seeing on the news in the last few weeks. When we were in California, we saw it happen again. Often they shoot themselves at the end, and you realize their anger and frustration are not at something out there. Their frustration is within themselves.

I always feel that gatherings like this satsaṅg need to happen more often. People can come, listen, think, and keep coming back. It's when one stays alone at home, and doesn't have somebody else to go to, that one conjures up ideas and thoughts and visions.

These days, many people don't have places where they feel they can go. In India, in my childhood, if you knew somebody who lived in your neighborhood was a friend and a good person, you would go to such a person. You knew you could hang out with him and get rid of any frustration. You might not necessarily know you were frustrated, but yet you would go. You'd think, "He's wise enough because he's a little bit older." He perhaps didn't

know why you came, but he'd think, "Something's a little tweaked here." So you talked. When you got home, you had a better sense of how you could handle things.

My parents, too, welcomed visitors. In the early days, my mother would have a towel and a change of clothes available. In India, it was the custom that if you came from outside, you would wash yourself and change into something comfortable. You took off your pants and put on a lungi, and just relaxed.

No one said, "My charge is this much for spending the day with you."

Yesterday, somebody told me, "Did you know that swami charges two hundred dollars per hour?"

I said, "Yes, I'm aware of it. But that's not what I want to do." These kinds of practices only discredit us.

I think each one of us should try to create a place in our home, or wherever we can, where our friends know they are welcome. In the ashram, for example, people know lunch is served at 1:00 and chai is at 4:00. They can come fifteen or twenty minutes ahead to be sure they are included in the count.

As society gets more modern and more technologically advanced, this is something we have to think more about. We need more places that aren't bars, where people go to get drunk and stoned and then leave and crash into somebody. We want to be drunk in a different way, stoned in a different way. And that difference is simply *love*.

So I think you're doing fine. Just keep talking and doing what you're doing.

I think each one of us should try to create a place in our home, or wherever we can, where our friends know they are welcome.



Fill Their Hearts

QUESTION:

We all have people in our lives who try to control how we feel. How do you help those people understand that they shouldn't try to control others?

GURUDEV:

You can't tell these people not to control others. That is one thing I have learned. As soon as you tell somebody "don't," the person wants to do it more.

I think they do this kind of thing for a couple of reasons. First, they want attention. And second, they want love.

So you have to give these people a lot of love. Fill their hearts. At some point, they will get saturated.

You have to first listen to them, play with them a little bit. You can share stories with them. Slowly, gently, talk with them. It's not that you can simply say, "Okay, now I've told you. Done!" Sometimes it takes a few years, I'm sorry to say.

A little boy comes here with his babysitter. Even though we've become the best of friends, he got angry when he was here the other day. He wanted to latch onto my leg and pull on me. Instead of turning away, I played with him a little. He played with me. Of course, we've done this over the few years that he's been coming here.

I find the same with adults. Adults are big people, but they are just small children inside. For them, control is about feeling they're in power. This is the same whether they are in positions of power or not in positions of power.

On the freeway, everybody knows that cars have to merge into a lane one at a time. But then somebody thinks, "Why should I wait? I want to go now!"

We may say, "Okay, let them go." Other times we think, "No. Why should I let them go?"

Sometimes people see how they are acting. It may be too late, but they do see it. Actually, I feel that each one of us always knows what we are doing, even though it may seem as if we don't. A person may say, "Oh, I never knew I was like that!" But I don't think so. I think the person always knew; he just tried to act as if he didn't know.

So, you have to become aware. You have to see it as a play.

Many people may try to control you. They may try to tell you how you should be, what you should do. Over time, you develop the courage to be yourself.

Over time you also realize such people will always be there. As soon as you fix one, the next one will be ready. It won't end.

For this reason, the most one of us can do is work within our little world, with the people we know. We play with them. We take our time with them. Slowly, we make them better humans. Then, as they go out into their circle of friends, to the people they know, they purposely protect what they have received.

When it comes to the rest of the big world, we let God take care of it.

Develop the courage to be yourself.



G L O S S A R Y

āratī

waving of lights to worship a deity

pūjā

worship

śakti

the creative energy of the universe; the awakened spiritual energy

samādhi

union with the Absolute

satsaṅg

in the company of the Truth

