

Siddha Marg



सच्चिदानन्द

Vedānta speaks about sat-cit-ānanda, or existence-consciousness-bliss. Sat is that which exists in all things, in all places, at all times. No matter what situation you are in, if you go within, that is what you experience. We might think of it as Truth.

Consciousness, or cit, is the illuminating factor. When we see something, we know what it is from within. Not just through the mind, but from deep within ourselves, we come to understand what that is.

Being in that space of Truth, through understanding what it is, we come to experience ānanda, or bliss.

MAHĀMANDALESHWAR SWAMI NITYĀNANDA

The purpose of Siddha Marg is to share the eternal teachings, sanātan dharma. Formal talks, study, conversations, question and answers, kirtan, meditation, and silence are some of the methods used by Gurudev, Mahāmandaleshwar Swami Nityānanda Saraswatī, to share his ruminations on and expression of the universal philosophy. This issue features excerpts from a talk he gave at the La Quinta Intensive in Mexico this summer.

The World Is as You See It

With great love and respect, I welcome you to our Intensive here. As everybody came up for *darśan* at the end of the program last night, it was great to see all of the smiling faces.

And it was especially joyous to see the young people here. Normally, teenagers think that an event like this is boring. They wonder, “What are my parents doing?”

You can tell them that many adults feel the same way, even at the age they are now. It takes a long time to come to an understanding about this path.

Earlier this month, we were in Northern California in a retreat like this. An American man gave me a quote. In it, the monk says, “Looking for serenity, you have come to the monastery.” For us, this Intensive is our monastery today. And then the monk says, “Looking for serenity, I am leaving the monastery.”

People of the world come to a monastery to become silent. But the monk, who has been living in the monastery for a long time, tortured by his own mind, is leaving that monastery. He is running away from the silence.

Baba Muktānanda always said, “The mind is the cause of our bondage; and the mind is the cause of our liberation.” He illustrated this through a story about a king who builds a palace of mirrors.

By accident, a dog walks into that palace of mirrors. Everywhere the dog looks, he sees another dog. So he begins to growl. The dog in the mirror growls back.

The World Is as You See It (continued)

When your mind realizes that all of this is simply a manifestation of the same Consciousness, it begins to enjoy looking at all of it.

Then the first dog shows his teeth. And the dog in the mirror also shows his teeth.

The first dog barks. And the dog in the mirror barks back.

Everywhere the dog turns, he sees another dog growling, another dog barking, another dog showing its teeth. So he becomes filled with fear, and he falls to the floor and dies.

A sage walks into that same palace of mirrors. He looks at all the various forms in the mirrors, and he knows each is his own reflection. He appreciates being able to see so many different forms of himself.

What is the difference between the dog and the sage? When you don't perceive the oneness in everything, your mind becomes filled with fear. When your mind realizes that all of this is simply a manifestation of the same Consciousness, it begins to enjoy looking at all of it.

The whole purpose of meditation—and of understanding this knowledge—is to come to a place of oneness, to bring the mind to a place of quiet. That is what our day today is about.

Like the monk, you will leave this monastery tomorrow. But hopefully by the time you do, you'll have attained some peace and quiet within yourself.

Whenever we come together like this, each person has made the decision to take the time for spiritual practice. Somewhere within yourself there is a desire to know something. You may not understand everything by the end of the weekend, but a little understanding of the question "Who am I?" can come about.

Many things happen in our lives. How we understand these things depends on the state of our mind. The sage says,

"The world is as you see it." If you see the world as a wonderful place, it is a wonderful place. If you see it as a miserable place, you will find it is full of misery.

What the sage is saying is that the only place that needs fixing is the mind. Each of us is tortured by nothing else and no one else except our own mind.

As you study the scriptures, you realize that they focus upon perception. Let's take an example from the early days, when people had two or three old-fashioned landlines in the house. Imagine you are sitting at home, waiting for a phone call you were supposed to get at 9 a.m. That time has come and gone.

You begin to think, "Well, that person never liked me anyway." And you think, "I don't love that person anyway."

You're sitting on your bed with these thoughts when your mother walks into the room and asks, "What is going on?"

You say, "I was expecting a call at 9 a.m. It's almost 9:30, and the phone hasn't rung."

Your mother says, "Let me check the phones." So she goes into the other room and sees that one phone is off the hook. As soon as she puts it back on, the phone rings.

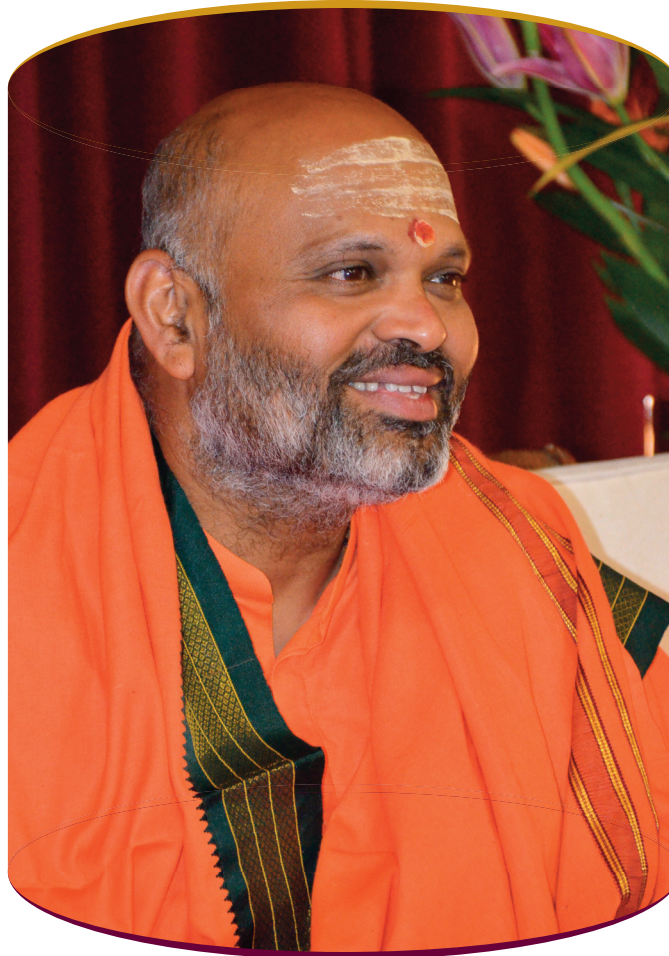
Your friend says, "I've been calling you for the last thirty minutes, and the phone has been busy."

You don't say anything about all the thoughts you had for the last thirty minutes because all of a sudden your perception has changed completely. Those thirty minutes of perception were all in your imagination. Now you realize there was no need to create any of those thoughts.

The sages tell us that we are what we think.

The World Is as You See It (continued)

**Yoga brings about a
shift in the way we see
this world.**



Good, uplifting thoughts make us free. Thoughts like those from the thirty minutes bind us. They upset us and make us angry. They take us to the wrong places within ourselves. But with just a little light, a little illumination, the problem is gone. We have to remember to put the phone back on the hook, and everything will be fine.

Yoga brings about a shift in the way we see this world. Through the process of meditation, we make a shift in our mind's perception. The mind can focus upon anything, but we want it to focus upon something worthy.

Instead of focusing on unworthy ideas or concepts, the process of spiritual practice, of *sādhana*, reminds us again and again, "O my mind, have noble thoughts."

Whether you are a little child, a teenager, a middle-aged person, or a person in the elder years, you can tell your mind, "Have noble thoughts."

As the mind begins to have noble thoughts, this world also becomes wonderful. The world doesn't change. Nothing changes on the outside. The change is in your own mind.



Where Did You Put Your Umbrella?

None of us is tortured by anything besides the mind. Learn to place your mind correctly.

It takes a long time to understand the mind.

A student stays in a monastery for twelve years. At the end of twelve years, he thinks it is time for him to progress to the next level. So he asks his teacher in the monastery where he should go.

The teacher advises him to go to a particular monastery where he will find a master who is at the next level.

On his way there, it is raining, as it was here last night. When he arrives at the second monastery, he places his umbrella outside the door and goes in.

The new teacher asks him, “On which side of the door did you leave your umbrella: left or right?”

The student says, “I don’t know.”

The teacher says, “Then go back to your first teacher. If you don’t even remember whether you placed your umbrella on the left or the right, how will you know where you have placed your mind?”

We tend to think of learning yoga and meditation in a class, like what we are doing right now. But great teachers, such as Baba Muktānanda, give us a little teaching and then tell us, “Now sit with it.” Every so often, they ask us a question: “Where did you place the umbrella?”

We think, “Is it important where I placed the umbrella?” But to them, there is nothing that is less important, and

nothing that is more important. Everything is important when it comes to where we place our mind.

So this weekend, observe your mind. None of us is tortured by anything besides the mind. Learn to place your mind correctly. Whether it’s to the left, right, or center doesn’t matter; find the place that’s most appropriate in your life.

Let your mind become quiet. Let it become peaceful. Allow the gentleness that is within you to come forth. Allow yourself to become still. Focus your mind.

You may still have some thoughts, but those thoughts won’t torture or even worry you when you have become quiet and peaceful within yourself.

Learn to smile with the joy that dwells within. You don’t need to wait for a special moment for something to happen. Now is the moment.

In the *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā*, the sage Aṣṭāvakra talks about bondage and freedom. He holds a long conversation with King Janaka, who asks, “Why is it that I find myself far away from the Self?”

The sage explains that the mind is always rushing out. It is grazing among the world of objects. It is running wild among these objects, rejecting things it feels are not conducive and pursuing things it imagines to be conducive. It thinks those things will bring it happiness.

The mind is both hunting after objects and being hunted itself. It is constantly constructing and destroying, loving

Where Did You Put Your Umbrella? (continued)

and fighting. From the time it is inside the womb of the mother till the time it dies, the mind—and ego—is constantly struggling. It's always suffering. This, the sage says, is bondage.

The *Upaniṣads* describe bondage with one word: mine. Every time the mind thinks, “Mine, mine, mine,” that is bondage. Every time the mind thinks, “Not mine,” that is freedom.

The sage tells us that, throughout life, we must live with the awareness that nothing is really mine. Let the mind not grieve, accept, or reject. Let it not feel happy or sad. Doing that will only lead to bondage. The sage Aṣṭāvakra tells Janaka to come to this place within himself.

The *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* says that the reduction of thoughts is freedom. When the mind stops desiring, that is freedom.

Similarly, Pātañjali tells us that yoga is the cessation of all the modifications of thought.

The experience of stillness, of one-pointedness, is the result of a reduction in the thought process. You teach the mind to become detached. You want to come to a place where you are not operating from a sense of ego. Stop accepting and rejecting, and just allow yourself to be in a place of play. Look at everything as nothing but a play of Consciousness.

The sages remind us again and again that what we seek cannot be found outside. It is found within us. It is found within when all the various desires that arise through the mind have dried up. When those desires have been conquered, the whole cycle of thoughts ceases. And when thoughts cease, the mind becomes quiet. This is the state of freedom.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* says, “An individual who has conquered his mind has come to live in perfect equanimity in all conditions of life, in all relationships. He indeed rests in the Absolute.”

As you move about today—as you pick up something, as you place something down, as you open and close doors—allow yourself to be more conscious. We perform a lot of actions, but many are performed without awareness. What we want to do is bring about greater awareness of where our mind is, so our actions can be performed with understanding.

Just as the teacher asked, “Where did you place the umbrella?”, as you go about your activities today, be conscious of all that you are doing.

A seeker is always seeking knowledge, seeking wisdom. A seeker is always contemplating. A seeker wants his mind to always be doing uplifting work, to constantly use discrimination. The mind is trying to understand what is happening in life, and we want to slowly bring it to the place where it is performing good thoughts, and through good thoughts, good actions.



**When thoughts cease,
the mind becomes
quiet. This is the state of
freedom.**

The Mind's True Nature

As we become peaceful
and contented and our
minds become quiet,
may we also experience
oneness.

The purpose of repetition of the mantra is to bring the mind to contemplate its own true nature. Normally, as the sage said, the mind is running outside into the objects of this world. Instead, we want that mind to go inside and contemplate its true nature.

The mantra we use in meditation is *Hamṣa*. *Ham* is “I am” and *sa* is “That.” As you repeat the mantra, your mind comes to the awareness and the understanding of “I am That,” or “I am the divine Self.”

Instead of being worried about all the various things it worries about, the mind begins to contemplate its true nature. Take your mind away from the body, away from all the various thoughts you always have. Let it come to sit in the awareness of “I am That.”

A conscious effort has to be put forth by each and every one of us to, first of all, be comfortable inside our own body. Then, when you are comfortable within your own body, slowly become aware of your breathing, of the breath.

When your breathing becomes even, allow yourself to focus upon *Hamṣa*. As the breath goes in, *Ham*; as the breath goes out, *sa*. Let the mind become free of all dualities, of all sense of separation, of all the various things that torture you during a normal day. Bring it to a place of peace.

The *Upaniṣads* tell us that our basic nature is *ānanda*, bliss. If our nature is bliss, let us experience and feel that.

Throughout this day, let us become quiet. Let us become

still. Let us become focused. Let us develop our own clarity. Let us become steady. Let us dwell within, with our own Self.

We want that by the end of the day, we have all come closer to that divinity, that Truth, that Self, that dwells within us.

May we all recognize the Self. May we find satisfaction. May we find contentment. May we experience peace within our own being. And as we become peaceful and contented, and our minds become quiet, may we also experience oneness.

It's just a matter of a few hours. Around 5 o'clock, you will have the choice whether you want to continue to remain in that quiet and stillness or go back to what you are used to. At least till 5 o'clock, give yourself permission to have a day of stillness, a day of quietude.

Just trust and be at peace in your own being. Thoughts will arise, desires will arise, doubts will arise, but allow yourself to remain quiet. The choice really is our own. We have to teach ourselves to live this kind of life, to do all our activities from that place of stillness.



G L O S S A R Y

ānanda

bliss

Aṣṭāvakra

a Vedic sage

Aṣṭāvakra Gītā

Hindu scripture

Bhagavad Gītā

Hindu scripture

darśan

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

Hamṣa

mantra; literally, “I am That”

Janaka, King

Vedic king, student of Aṣṭāvakra

Pātañjalī

[2nd c BCE] author of the *Yoga Sūtras*

sādhana

spiritual practices

Upaniṣads

ancient Hindu scriptures

Yoga Vāsiṣṭha

scripture narrating dialogue between Rāma
and sage Vāsiṣṭha

