



सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः

MAY ALL BEINGS BE CONTENT.

“This prayer that we chant each day at Shanti Mandir is a reminder that we need nothing more than to be content with what is. Instead of desiring more, demanding more, just be content. This is the knowledge, the wisdom.

“It is what the Guru does – he makes us content, removing all afflictions, giving us the wisdom, revealing the inner light that lets us see the perfection of everything.”

MAHĀMANDALESHWAR SWAMI NITYĀNANDA

Seeing all as the one Self

At the ashram in New York state, during the September 2001 celebrations leading up to the commemoration of the solar mahāsamadhi (passing) of Baba Muktānanda nineteen years before, Mahāmandaleshwar Swami Nityānanda talked about the power of love and devotion and how we, too, through a single focus on the divine, can realize a saint’s state of enlightenment.

Pople who come to a Guru often think everyone is there for the same purpose: for spiritual upliftment, for understanding that their true nature is Consciousness. But not everybody comes for such reasons.

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “O Arjuna, four types of people worship me.”

One type come because they are distressed in life. They have a problem they don’t know how to resolve, and want help.

The second type come because they want some material or social gain.

The third type are seekers. They wish to understand the Truth, to know the purpose of life.

The fourth type are *jñānis* (knowers) or *bhaktas* (lovers) of the divine. They have already experienced the Truth and simply come to sit in its presence. There are no questions, desires, or wants in their mind. They simply wish to absorb the experience of what is true, what is real.

Can devotion and knowledge go together? At first glance, this may seem like a contradiction. Can a person who is full of knowledge feel devotion?

When we meet people of this type, we realize, yes, it’s possible. Without having knowledge of what we are worshipping, we can’t really worship it. Conversely, we

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can't have true knowledge of what we are worshiping unless we really feel it with our heart. It's not enough to know "I am That" or "I am Consciousness."

Wise pundits and scholars can sit and debate the Truth but cannot impart the direct experience, the actual feeling.

Tukārām, a famous saint from the state of Maharashtra, composed poems to describe his exalted state of devotion. These poems are known as *abhangas*, and people still sing them today. Fearless, immersed in the feeling of his beloved Lord Hari, Tukārām sang about the great deeds of the Lord. He would sing anywhere, at any time, free of attachment, unafraid of mockery.

After all, what should a knower of the Truth do?

In these times, in a somewhat different state, people sit in dining rooms all over the world, discussing and hearing about the deeds of the day – what they've done, what they're doing, and where they're going.

Tukārām, however, in his *abhangas* about the great deeds of Hari, called out to people, saying, "If there is something you wish to hear about, hear about the Lord, hear about the Truth. Sing his praises without any fear of ridicule. Chant his name and don't worry about what people might say."

As we all know, the same society can praise us for being normal or blame us for being spiritual. For this reason, Tukārām tells us we should remain free from attachment and develop love for our Lord by singing his name and letting our heart melt in devotion. Such a devotee "laughs loudly, weeps, screams, sings, or dances like one possessed, breaking all the rules and conventions."

If someone asks, "What does real devotion feel like?" how do we find the words to adequately describe it? All I can think of is the childhood experience of the unconditional love of a mother, father, or respected elder. If for a moment we sat on their lap, forgot everything, and simply allowed ourselves to connect to that space within us, to that space within them, in that moment we no longer thought of anything, we simply felt the overwhelming emotion called love.

In the same way, says Tukārām, when we find ourselves embraced by the Lord, the heart simply melts. We laugh ecstatically, weep, cry out, or dance like one possessed. There is no way to express what that experience is like. There are no words for it.

Imagine the feeling in Tukārām's heart when Lord Hari visited him in disguise, telling everyone gathered there that he had come for Tukārām's *darśan*, to enjoy his presence.

Imagine our heart's feeling if the Lord of the universe, whose *darśan* is the ultimate desire of so many devotees, were to appear in this very space now, for the *darśan* of those gathered here. If the heart were pure and open, connected with That, it would overflow with devotion and love and simply melt. We would have that ecstatic feeling beyond description.

For most of our life, our mind is running nonstop. For example, when we see someone for the first time, we don't merely think he or she is nice; we scan the person from top to bottom. What has she done with her hair? What happened to his face? Why is she wearing these clothes with those shoes and socks? Where did he come from? And so on. It all happens in a split second.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* tells us that a bhakta has no hatred toward anyone, but is friendly and compassionate to all, without attachment or ego. How do we come to this understanding? How do we enter this state? By holding the single thought of You, of God everywhere.

What we really want is for our mind to remain focused on a single thought, and from there to open up to the thoughtless state.

Tukārām says, “I have focused my mind on You. Whatever there is, it’s You. What I have attained is You.”

When the saint says “You,” he means Truth, Consciousness, God. In the midst of multitudes, the mind simply sees the divine essence that has become all forms.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* tells us that a bhakta harbors no hatred toward anyone, but is friendly and compassionate to all, without attachment or ego.

How do we come to this understanding? How do we enter this state?

By holding the single thought of You, of God everywhere. Then whatever we see is You, dwelling in the midst of all this, as all this. What mind, what being, what house, what body, what space exists where You are not?

We may think we love somebody because of who he is, but love actually flows from connecting with the real source of love, the Self.

Once I heard about two people who went on a blind date, and fell in love with each other straightaway. They barely knew anything about each other, not even their background or qualities. But for no apparent reason a feeling of intense love welled up. Why? Because, at least for that time, they connected to that place of love within themselves: the inner heart. That is why the scriptures say it is because of the Self that we feel such love.

Imagine this scenario: we are on a blind date and feel extraordinary love. Suddenly our date drops dead. Do

we say, “Well, I fell in love with this body, so I will take it home with me?” Do we keep it there for the rest of our life, proclaiming how much we love it? Do we? Of course not.

Whether we have loved somebody for an hour or a lifetime, it doesn’t matter, when consciousness departs the body, we say our farewells. As the scriptures remind us, it is because of the Self, that supreme Consciousness dwelling within, that we loved him or her, that he or she was so dear.

What we really have loved is the existence of that sublime Consciousness, and so the poet saint says, “In every mind, in every heart, You exist, You are there.”

As Baba would say, when people are in a nightclub, everyone just wants to have fun. Nobody is thinking he or she is Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Moslem, or Buddhist. The feeling is simply of people having fun together.

What are all these distinctions, all these differences? It is God who has created us. It is God who, as Consciousness, has become us. Whatever our skin, religion, gender, age, or abilities, there is only that pure Consciousness.

Christians visit a church, Moslems visit a mosque, Jews visit a synagogue, and Hindus visit a temple. Each place may look different, but is that why people go? No. They go to receive grace, to experience the divine energy.

One does not really visit such places to see a person or a statue, or to admire some architectural feature. One actually goes to experience that timeless presence, the presence of the divine.

The poet saint tells us that when we arrive in that space, we bow our head – meaning we surrender our

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individuality, our ego sense of being separate – and allow ourselves to be, feeling nothing but That. Then, as Tukārām says, “From the earth to the sky, from the sky to the earth, wherever I look, I see You. The clouds and the rain, the birds and the trees, the creatures on the ground – whatever there is, it is only You whom I see, O beloved, nothing else but You.”

In that state, we naturally feel friendliness, compassion, kindness, and love toward all because we are experiencing all as Consciousness, as our true Self. Certainly, there is a physical body that makes us seem different from others, but when the body dies, Consciousness remains, not different from all.

Someone asked me to talk about the subject of *spanda*. The literal meaning is throb. When Baba was sharing with us the philosophy of Kashmir Śaivism, he talked about this divine throb, this constant pulsation, saying it is what allows us to live. Of course, in the medical sense, we would say it is the heart that lets us live: the heart is throbbing; therefore, I am living. But there is another way of understanding things.

This *spanda*, this throb, is the dynamic aspect of the Śiva principle.

It is only because it pulsates that we can breathe, think, see, and do. We’re alive only because of this constant divine throb.

The individual might think, “I’m working for my family, feeding them,” but really who is doing anything? It’s simply the continual throb of divine Consciousness.

Recently I looked at a photo of the Kumbha Mela, showing countless people along the Ganges, holding candles. It puts things in perspective. We might think,

“I am the best, I am the greatest,” until we see that in the midst of millions we are a mere speck.

It is from this outlook that the sages remind us to neither delight nor agonize about the circumstances of our life, but to remain content, resting in the simplicity of our being.

We are constantly worrying, “What am I going to do? What will people say about me when I leave?” Yet what really matters is what we are doing with our own heart.

Baba often remarked that when the soul departs from the subtle body, what matters are the impressions that accompany us, the *saṃskāras*. What we leave behind no longer matters, what people say about us no longer matters. What does matter is what goes with us.

As Baba told it, when we arrive at death’s immigration counter, the officials first look at our passport of karma, which contains our *saṃskāras*, and then decide which entrance we should take. Of course, we don’t usually think about such things because we’ve never met the Lord of Death or his agents. We only know the people here and what they might say. So we live a life that can barely be called a “life” because we are dependent on what others think.

What really matters is to see all as God, as pure Consciousness, feeling that divine throb, that *spanda*.

Sometimes we wonder, “What effect does walking this path have on me? Does it really do something? Do I really get something?”

Walking this path allows the *śakti*, the grace, to do its work, to have its effect. The knowledge, the understanding, begins to seep in.

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Whether we wish it or not, if we put our hand in water, it gets wet. In the same way, when we come into the presence of divine Consciousness, of Truth, when we sit in the company of beings who are saturated with Truth, love, and devotion, we are drenched with that feeling.

Whereas the *māyā* of this world can give us instant satisfaction, spiritual satisfaction usually takes a little longer because first that *māyā* has to be dissolved. Some people protest that four hours of daily chanting is too much, but I know people who chant eighteen hours a day.

It's all in the eyes of the beholder. One who sees all as the divine continues to perceive the vast diversity of this world of creation, but apprehends it as nothing other than Consciousness manifesting as form, nothing other than the divine play. There may be friendly and unfriendly people, but all are Consciousness, God. As the poet saint says, "There is only You."

Engagement in the world can produce its "wow" moments, but they quickly dissipate. However, when we experience the ecstasy Tukārām describes, when that feeling arises in *satsaṅg* or during our spiritual practices, we realize that the source is within, that it never goes anywhere, and that we can experience it continually.

Soon the full moon will rise, marking Baba's solar mahāsamadhi, the day nineteen years ago when he passed away. Just remembering him evokes his extraordinary presence. Nothing else in the world compares to the feeling of that presence. Even as a child, I was aware of it. Though I was unable to communicate at that time what was felt, there was certainly a subtle knowing, an unmistakable awareness.

As the poet saint says, "There is only this one thought – You. Because my mind always wants to focus on something, I have focused it on You, O beloved, only You. Whatever exists is You."

When we come to this faith and understanding, the world is simply experienced as part of our Self. As the Gītā says, we do not run away from the world and the world does not run away from us.

Saint Tukārām, ever intoxicated by the nectar of the direct experience of God, was always chanting the name of his beloved Pāṇḍuraṅga, the divine sounds pouring forth from that ocean of love and devotion day and night.

A long time ago, a wonderful movie was made of his life. We have it in the ashram. I invite everyone to come and view it, not once, but two or three times. Perhaps then we will realize that if we simply have this vision Tukārām describes, if our mind, eyes, and ears are filled with the experience of the divine, there is nothing more sublime we can attain in life.

We all have the potential to feel this love and devotion, this ecstasy. And it comes to fruition when we are truly fulfilled and contented, satiated with joy at all times. Sensory satisfactions remain, but they no longer control us because we have no more desires, wants, or needs. The nectar of the divine presence completely satisfies. Nothing else is needed.

Then we sit in our own company, smiling. The world may think we are mad, but we know what that smile is about. Even if we are unable to express what is happening in words, we can simply live in that bliss.



सर्वज्ञ-पदमित्याहुर्देही सर्वमयो बुधः ।
सदानन्दः सदा शान्तो रमते यत्र कुत्रचित् ॥

THE WISE SAY THAT THE ALL-KNOWING STATE IS THAT
IN WHICH THE EMBODIED SOUL BECOMES ONE WITH EVERYTHING.
THEN, EVER BLISSFUL AND EVER TRANQUIL,
WE REJOICE WHEREVER WE MAY BE.

- GURU GĪTĀ, VERSE 126