



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 SWĀMI NITYĀNANDA

Dye me in your color

During the 2009 summer season at the ashram in Walden, a series of talks was given by various devotees at the Sunday Satsaṅgs with the theme Lives of the Saints. On Sunday July 12, the auspicious day of Guru Pūrṇimā, Mahāmandaleshwar Swāmi Nityānanda shared his understanding of how we, too, can live in that space of the divine.

W

hen we come to a saint and sit in his company, we might sometimes wonder, “What am I doing here?”

There is a Sufi story of a man who used to keep dye in a tub. When people came to have their clothes dyed, he would ask them what color they wanted. Whatever their choice, he would dip their cloth in the tub, and even though he never changed the dye, the cloth would emerge the exact color they wanted.

A man who had been watching in amazement decided to give his clothes to the dyer, who asked, “O brother, what color do you want?”

The man replied, “Please dye my cloth the color of the dye in your tub.”

When people visit a saint, they often go with prayers or with lists of wants and needs, thinking, “Okay, this week this issue is most important, so I will push the others down the list.” Each week new lists are devised.

But when we come to the court of God, when we sit in that presence and connect to that divinity within ourselves, really, in that space there is no need to ask for anything. If we do ask, it is often about something relatively petty, something we think will satisfy us. But we soon discover that it only satisfies briefly, until the next want or desire arises.

Therefore, the poet-saint Bhartṛhari says,

It is not I who have enjoyed pleasures,
It is the pleasures that have enjoyed me.
If it were I who was enjoying the pleasures,
I should enjoy them when I want, but they
enjoy me instead.

I was extremely fortunate in spending time with Baba. If I were to use the multiplication sign to calculate the value, I would need to multiply by infinity. Such was the quality of Baba's company.

There are so many people on this earth, yet few actually make the effort to go first to a holy man, sit in his presence, and start contemplating, "Who am I? What am I doing here?" Many are simply born, live, and die. If the sage asks them, "What have you done?" they say, "What do you mean, what have I done?"

The sage is asking us in what color we are dying ourselves. Is it the dye of Nityānanda, Muktaṅnanda, Brahmānanda, or whatever ānanda with whom we associate? What have we really done in life? Is it the dye of *Cidānandarupah Śivo 'ham Śivo 'ham?* Have we understood "I am Consciousness, I am Bliss, I am Śiva, I am Śiva"? If not, well, without having deeply contemplated the question "Who am I?" there will be a blank.

I spent the first twenty years of my life knowing Baba. For the first fifteen and a half years, it was weekends and holidays, traveling with my parents from Mumbai, where I lived and attended school. The last four and a half years of Baba's physical existence, it was twenty-four hours a day.

In April 1978 I came to the ashram in Ganeshpuri to live with Baba permanently. At times the mind wondered, "What is happening here? What is going on?" And then I always reminded myself, "I am here because I want to be with Baba. I am here because I enjoy being in this presence. I am here for 'me.'"

As I have often shared, if someone asked at that time, "What happens here?" I would simply reply, "It is just wonderful. It feels good. It is joyous – an excellent atmosphere to be in."

Now, twenty-seven years after Baba left the physical body, if someone were to ask, the answer would be as the Sufi saints say, "I used to think I knew everything, but having been in the company of the wise, I realize I know nothing."

It is not easy for the mind to say that "I know nothing" because it thinks, "I know everything." Right? If we want to say something, and we say, "There is actually nothing to say," what is there to say?

A couple of days ago I was reading about the difference between listening and hearing. Of course, hearing happens because sound waves strike the eardrum. But how much do we actually listen? The writer suggests that we should listen seventy percent of the time, and if need be, speak thirty percent of the time.

Now, that would be trouble for most of us because in the middle of listening to someone, we say, "Wait a minute, I have a quick answer for you, a better answer. I already know."

Therefore the writer advises, "Listen quietly and just allow the person to speak."

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When we think of the softness exuded by a being immersed in the experience of divine consciousness, we realize that we, too, can be soft with people, not just on the physical level – and certainly not faking it – but very soft in every pore of our being. Every cell can emit softness.

One thing we often do not realize is how much physical energy is consumed by hearing and listening. We must be focused, very present, showing that we are fully engaged. So it is with seeing.

The word *darśan*, which is not about bringing offerings, comes from the root *dr̥ṣṭi iti darśanam*: to see. What is it that I wish to see when I have the darśan of a sage, of somebody whom I consider wise? I often think of the softness such a being conveys. Most of us do not realize how hard we can appear when we talk, when we offer, when we say, “Move over.”

I am reminded of Tukārām Mahārāj, who said, “We, devotees, servants of Viṣṇu, are softer than butter.”

If while preparing a cake, we take soft butter and squeeze it, there is a wonderful feeling as it slips between the fingers. When we think of the softness exuded by a being immersed in the experience of divine consciousness, we realize that we, too, can be soft with people, not just on the physical level – and certainly not faking it – but very soft in every pore of our being. Every cell can emit softness.

We also can bring ourselves to that place of tenderness, of softness. We do not have to be hard or harsh. We can choose to be loving, kind, and sweet, while remaining very practical. Being kind and loving does not mean we must bend over backwards. The practicality of the application of the teachings in life also accompanies the softness. Some might think that in order to be soft and kind, we must be a certain way, and to be practical we must be another way. But along with the softness and the practicality is wisdom.

A sage never misses an opportunity to remind us who we really are. We might think that it is only in *Satsaṅg* or when he lectures or gives us his teachings that he reminds us of the question “Who am I?” But when we think about the time we spent in his company, in his space, we realize that each and every moment the sage is reminding us to address the question “Who am I? Who am I? Who am I?”

Knowing who we truly are is the experience he wants us to have, always. In the *Śiva Sūtras* we read:

The fourth state, *turiya*, the state of absorption in one’s Self, must be poured into the other three states (waking, dreaming, and deep sleep). How? Like oil is poured uninterruptedly from one container into another.
(*Śiva Sūtras* III.20)

During these Sunday Satsaṅgs we have seen, heard, and felt a lot about the lives of these saints. Now, as Baba would say, we need to imbibe.

If there is one thing we probably do not do well as humans, it is to imbibe. We see, hear, and feel the teachings, and experience them on an external, physical, superficial level. But what we really want is to carry them within, so that wherever we go, that experience of divinity accompanies us.

Then our efforts in the company of a saint bear fruit. The experience of the saint is no longer just a memory of the past, it is alive and constant. We no longer think, “Those were the teachings.” We live them.

When you hear about great saints, such as Jñāneśvar, Changdev, and Muktabāi, rather than thinking that they

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once lived and these were their teachings, think of the potential to be in their state now. The awareness of non-dual wisdom can be held by each of us. Their stories do not only tell us what was, they inform us about what is actually possible. They tell us we have the ability, the potential, to be like that now.

The Hasidim tell a story of an old rabbi who taught in an ancient village. One day he was asked by one of his students, “How should one determine the hour when night ends and day begins?”

One student ventured an opinion, saying, “It is when one can distinguish a dog from a sheep in the distance.”

“That is not the answer,” said the rabbi.

Another student offered, “Is it when one can distinguish a date tree from a fig tree in the distance?”

“No,” said the rabbi.

“So can you please tell us?” asked the students.

Said the rabbi, “It is when you can look into the face of a stranger and see your sister or brother. Until then, night is still with us.”

The light dawns only when we are able to experience the divine in everyone we meet, everyone we see, everyone with whom we act and interact. The experience of the divine is not something to be realized only with one we consider holy or saint-like, but with anyone and everyone.

As Baba says in his writings, “When someone comes to me, first I see a blue light, then I see the person.”

So, the first vision is of consciousness, of divinity. Then as we settle, we realize, “Oh, it is this form of consciousness.”

Today we are dyed in the color of our perceptions, of our mind and its limited understanding. The sage wants us to become free of that and connect with the vast potential that exists within. The *Bhagavad Gītā* (III.21) says,

Whatever a great man does, others imitate.
Whatever he sets up as the standard, the world follows.

In his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Swami Chinmayānandaji says, “It is a psychological truth that a human is essentially an imitating animal.”

If we observe life, we notice that often we simply follow or imitate what others have done. Only once in a while do we stop to ask, “What am I doing? Why am I doing this?”

We can so easily fall into repetitive behavior, just getting up and doing without thinking. If we ask ourselves why, we say, “Because that is what I do every day. He did it, she did it, they did it, and so I do it, too.” We do not stop to ponder, to contemplate more deeply.

For example, I remember when we arrived at the airport in Newark. As we exited security, I noticed that everybody was going to an escalator on the right. There was a long line.

I pondered for a moment, “How could such a big airport have only one escalator?” When I looked to the left, I saw a second escalator that was empty. Why? Well, as everybody goes, so do we. We do not stop to think, to ponder.

So I thought, “Let me be wise,” and took the left escalator.

Rather than blindly following everyone, I chose to exercise the power of discrimination by stopping for a

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moment to ask myself, “Where? Why? What?” This is what a sage awakens within us. It is there within all of us all the time, but we are not always awake to it.

Chinmayānandaji continues, “Students can be disciplined only when teachers are well behaved. The minor officials cannot be kind and honest when the rulers of the country are corrupt tyrants. Children’s behavior depends entirely upon and is ever controlled by the standard of purity and culture of their parents.”

Before asking, “Why is he doing that? Why is she doing that?” we must first ask ourselves, “What am I doing and why?” Because somebody somewhere is following us, imitating us.

Baba often used to talk about... (*a cell phone rings*) There are a lot of mobiles ringing today. Did I lose anyone? Did the cell phone take anybody away?

Well, we could do what they do at some other satsaings, where people have to check in their cell phones before entering. Sometimes I think about bringing in rules and regulations, about being strict, but then I think, “No, people are wise. People are older. People are smart.” Then sometimes I realize, hmm, not always.

What just happened illustrates exactly what we are talking about. The cell phone is so much a part of us – always in the bag, purse, or pocket – that we do not even think about it. When we are about to go somewhere, instead of pausing to ask, “How should I prepare myself? How should I gather myself?” we just go.

Drumming is another good example. It is not about simply removing the drum’s covers and starting to

drum, it actually begins a few minutes beforehand as you feel the energy of the space. At what speed have people been chanting? What is the time now? How long should *Āratī karūn* be today?

The *Āratī karūn* can be very fast, done in almost seven and a half minutes, or nice and slow, lasting up to twelve minutes. One has to look around, become attuned. Who are the potential off-beat candidates, those not in the rhythm? Watch for them because the moment you start drumming, you have taken charge of the rhythm. All the issues have to be taken into consideration. If someone is off beat, you must remain centered and focused, not get caught in whatever he or she is doing.

Now, a drummer might think, “Do I really have to do all that? I just want to bang away. I’ll make it louder and tell the audio person, “Turn me up and I will drown the others out.” But that is not our way.

When we join a choir, they teach us to sing in such a way that our voice is not louder than the others. We must be able to hear and feel everyone in the choir. We must be in harmony. Naturally, these same principles apply to life. When I am with a group of people, I do not have to be loud. I do not have to be the one about whom, when I walk into a room, everyone says, “Ah! That’s so-and-so talking, giggling, laughing, silly.”

One of the things I learned from Baba is this: disappear as an individual!

Of course, modern-day psychology may not agree. How will ‘I’ disappear as an individual? After all, ‘I’ have worked twenty, thirty, forty years, done lots of therapy, lots of classes, lot of affirmations, and as a result have

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created 'me.' Then the Guru comes along and says, "Disappear."

That 'I' is what 'I' have created and regard as 'me.' But the Guru tells us that the true 'I' has existed before, exists now, and will exist in the future. That is the 'I' we wish to connect with, that eternal 'I' is what we want to be. No matter what form I take, that eternal 'I' is the 'I' that I want to perfect and be, not this individual 'I,' which is here-and-now in this body form and is dropped when the body is shed.

When we hear about saints and their lives, stories, and teachings, let us imbibe these great qualities of softness, wisdom, and practicality and think how we also can be soft, wise, and practical, not just sometimes but always, every moment.

With Baba, we were ever anticipating the next moment. Being present around him included awareness not just of what was happening now, but what might happen next. Yet how often we get lost in the here-and-now, never broadening our awareness. "I am having fun now," we think, "great!"

But what when it ends? What next? Are we still going to be having fun? Are we still going to be enjoying, happy, blissful? Will it still be great? After all, happiness is what we want to take into the next moment. For that, we must drop what is not needed and take with us only what is necessary.

Commenting on a verse from the third chapter of the Gītā, Swami Chinmayānandaji says, "Unless an individual acts diligently, chances are that the entire community will follow the low standard of retreat from

action set up by him and will ultimately invite a general decadence of culture in life."

So act with diligence, with wisdom, knowing that those following in your footsteps will also live and be like that. This is why Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, "Though I remain a *mukta* without attachment, I am acting diligently, as a model, for this generation to rise above the slothfulness of the age into vigorous activity."

I recall our time with Baba and the constant work, the constant doing. Someone shared with me that after his four days here celebrating Guru Pūrṇimā, the only complaint he had was sleep deprivation. He said, "It always seems that no sooner have we finished one thing than we have to go on to the next." He continued, "I would go to bed and tell myself, 'I have to wake up soon because I have to go to the next thing.'"

I smiled inwardly. If we do not do something, people say, "You do nothing." But if we constantly keep people busy, they complain, "You are always keeping us so busy."

But look at the daily schedule of Baba's ashram in Ganeshpuri. Wake-up time was 3:30 am and as early as 2:00 am for some who were offered *chai* in the kitchen. We did hatha yoga in the dining hall so we could be ready for the 4:00 am āratī. We were supposed to take a nap in the early afternoon, but the *Viṣṇu Sahasranām* began at 2:15 pm. It was non-stop through to 9:00 pm or later, seven days a week.

Because the mind is ever active, the sages tell us to give it something good to do, something productive so we do not unnecessarily waste time. As Swami Chinmayānandaji

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says, do not allow the mind to become slothful. Instead give it vigorous activity that is uplifting.

Swamiji further comments, “The very creed of Kṛṣṇa is active resistance to evil. Instead of yielding to the mind’s tendency to do mischief, to always be negative or demeaning, train it not to think with the instinctive incapacity of the daydreaming coward who cannot stand up against injustice. Fight for the accepted principles of national culture.”

When you think of great beings, of saints and their lives, ask yourself, “What is it that I have imbibed? What is it that I have become? Who was I then, and who am I now? How much of the experience of *Śivo ’ham, aham Brahmāsmi* is with me now? How present is my mind? Can I simply sit and be still? Can I enjoy my own company?”

If we do not enjoy our own company, why inflict that misery on others? The effort to be at peace with our self is sādhana. When a sage says, “Go sit in solitude,” he wants us to look at ourselves and learn to enjoy our own company.

We go for the darśan of a saint because it is uplifting. We go to be in his company because it is freeing. The challenge is for each of us to dye ourselves in that color so that when we leave the saint’s presence and go out into the world, those with whom we come into contact are also freed and uplifted.



MEDITATION ON THE

Guru

Meditation on the Guru is the basis of all methods of meditation. When I read in the Guru Gita (76):

*The root of meditation is the Guru’s form
The root of worship is the Guru’s feet
The root of mantra is the Guru’s word
The root of liberation is the Guru’s grace*

I obtained my supreme mantra. I accepted it with great love and reverence. This form of meditation is, indeed, superior to all sacrifices and all forms of worship. In the following mantra-like verse, Saint Tukaram says:

God can easily be obtained without any travail of sadhana, by maintaining deep faith in the Guru’s feet; therefore, worship the Guru and let your thoughts dwell on him. God is quite close to the Guru. How many times should I tell you: Tukaram says that by constant remembrance of the Guru, one can meet God anywhere – in an uninhabited forest or in the midst of multitudes.

I adopted this passage as my ideal, embraced the truth contained in it and enjoyed its reward. I firmly resolved to meditate on Sri Guru Nityananda.

CHITSHAKTI VILAS
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नित्योऽनित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानां एको बहूनां यो विदधाति कामान् ।
तम् आत्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वतीनेतरेषाम् ॥

THE SELF IS ETERNAL AMID THE TRANSIENT;
PURE CONSCIOUSNESS AMID LIMITED CONSCIOUSNESS;
ONE AMONG MANY;
AND THE FULFILLER OF ALL DESIRES.
ONLY THOSE STEADFAST ONES WHO REALIZE HIM AS SEATED
IN THE SELF EXPERIENCE ETERNAL PEACE.
THIS PEACE DOES NOT BELONG TO ANYONE ELSE.
- UPANIṢAD MANTRAS, VERSE 5