

Siddha Marg



धर्म अर्थ काम मोक्ष

The philosophy of yoga says we have four ideals in a human life: dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa.

We first have to understand dharma: what should I be doing, what sustains me in life? This takes some clarification, wisdom.

As we come to understand dharma, we also earn money, or wealth (artha). This isn't just about making money; it's about using our wealth for a higher purpose.

If our desires (kāma) sustain goodness and are uplifting, then as we satisfy them, we can be aware that the purpose of our life is liberation (mokṣa), becoming free of the cycle of birth and death.

MAHĀMANDALESHWAR SWAMI NITYĀNANDA

The purpose of Siddha Marg is to share the eternal teachings, sanātan dharma. Formal talks, study, conversations, questions 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 ashram in Walden, New York, in July 2018.

Responsibility

With great love and respect, I'd like to welcome everyone to our *satsaṅg* here this morning.

We are on our second to the last Sunday for the second term of this year. We were here in April, we went to Argentina, and we are here now. Then I go to India and come back in September and stay through October and November.

This week we have our youth retreat. As a kid, I used to look at people who were thirty years old and think—probably like the young ones are doing now—“Wow. That man looks old.” However, as time goes on and you experience life, you begin to think, “I wish I knew then what I know now.”

I will be fifty-six this October. The grey tells on me. When I was twenty and first came on the seat, when Baba Muktānanda had just left his body, everybody kept saying, “You're so young.” At that time, I wished I had a long grey or white beard and looked sagely and wise. But now I think it might be nice if it were black.

This month, Shanti Mandir completes thirty-one years of existence. This ashram completes nineteen years of existence. I believe it is wonderful to be part of a tradition and a lineage that will continue long after we are gone.

The times we live in are all about change, about new things. I won't go into too many details because that topic can get controversial. I'll let you use your great imagination to figure it out. But one thing we can say about our world today is that people think in a selfish manner; they think about “me,” about “I.”

Responsibility (continued)

The teachings tell us to think about *sarve*, about all, about everyone. Whatever action we may perform, we have to realize it has an effect, an outcome.

Somebody might say, “Why should I worry about that?”

When you do something, you have to think not just about what pleases you and your life but about the effects your action will have a couple of generations down. Those generations pay for that which their ancestors have done.

The philosophy of karma tells us to ask ourselves about the purpose of our actions. Satsaṅg inspires us to ask, “What is it that I want to do? And what is it that is meant to be done?”

New things are exciting. I don’t deny that. But then, later on, what happens to that newness? What is the outcome of that newness?

If you have read the news in the past month or two, and even before that, there’s been a lot of talk about fish eating plastic and animals eating plastic. I recently saw a picture of a fawn, a baby deer, with a plastic bag in its mouth. In India, many people throw away food in a plastic bag, and a cow may pick up that plastic bag to eat the food. There are reports that when a cow was operated upon, so many kilograms of plastic were found inside the stomach of that cow. A cow, as most of you know, has four stomachs. The food is eaten, it sits, it is brought up, the cow chews it, and then the food goes back down and is digested in the system. So digestion has four levels. The human also has a very intricate and complex system of digestion.

So, we perform an action, and that action has an effect. The word that comes to mind is *responsibility*.

Most of the year, we’re like a family living here. Sometimes I hear through the grapevine that the little fridge has food

rotting in it. If you’re living alone, you could say, “Yes, that’s my food.” But if we are a family of twenty, say, you would have to ask, “Are the other nineteen blind, that they don’t see the food rotting?” Some people write their names on their food items. So if rotting food is claimed by one person, the nineteen blind people can tell the person who owns the food that it is rotting.

I’ll share a story. King Akbar is ruling Delhi and the surrounding area and he asks his prime minister, Birbal, “How many blind people are in our area?”

Birbal says, “Give me some days and I will give you a count.”

Birbal takes an attendant with him and goes to the middle of the marketplace. He sits there sewing. When people see the prime minister in the middle of Delhi, sewing, they come up and ask, “Birbal, are you sewing?”

When each comes up, Birbal tells his attendant, “Write his name down.”

News about this travels to the king, and he comes to the marketplace to check out what’s happening. He says, “Birbal, are you sewing here in the marketplace?”

Birbal doesn’t answer the question, he just says, “Write his name down.”

The next day Birbal goes to court and says to the king, “I’ll come to court tomorrow and give you the answer.”

Everybody gathers because they’re curious: what has Birbal been doing in the marketplace sewing?

Birbal arrives in court the next day and says, “O Your Majesty, this is the list of the blind people, and you are one of them.”

Whatever action we perform, we have to realize it has an effect, an outcome.

Responsibility (continued)

The other day, a bunch of ashramites were putting beds together in Mukteshwari, and somebody came by and asked, “What is it that you are putting together?”

One person said, “Isn’t it obvious? We are putting beds together. You can see one that’s already been put together.”

So, if that is my food rotting in the fridge, am I blind or am I purposely allowing others to be tortured by my rotting food? That’s the kind of question we can ask in satsang. We sit here, we listen.

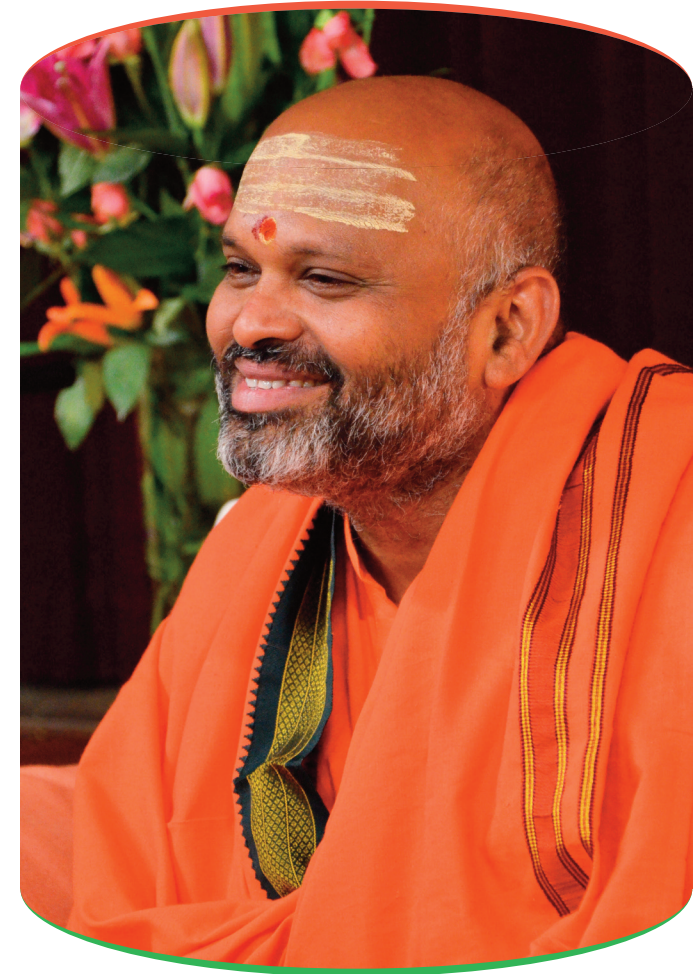
People say to me, “Tell people to think.”

I say, “What do you think I do every Sunday?”

Then people say, “I don’t agree with you.”

It’s not that they agree with me or don’t agree with me, it’s just that it’s too much work for them to think. It’s too much work to be responsible.

Being responsible means that I am answerable for the actions performed by me.



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Cooperation

Responsibility and cooperation need to be understood, to be figured out. Not everything is said through the mouth. Not always does everything have to be expressed.

My second word is *cooperation*. In India, we have a lot of cooperatives. We have cooperative farms and cooperative banks. Not corporations. I want to clarify the difference: there is a corporation—which is a business that is incorporated—and there is cooperation. The word cooperation has two parts: co and operation.

We'll see a lot of cooperation here this week with the young people. They'll make friends with each other and they'll get along. We are supposed to do that as humans. We are supposed to be responsible. We are supposed to cooperate.

I remember a joke from back in the 1980s, when I was traveling. An Indian goes to the UK for the first time. An Englishman says, "Sir, would you like a cup of tea?"

The Indian says no.

So the Englishman doesn't do anything.

About twenty minutes into their conversation, the Indian says, "Where's my cup of tea?"

The Englishman says, "You said no."

The Indian says, "Well, we say that. But your job is to serve it anyway."

This tradition continues even today in different parts of the world. It's considered humble to say, "No, no. Me? No, no chai. I would really like one, but no."

In this tradition, in all the countries where this "no" habit exists, you are forced to show people your love.

People say offering food is an expression of love. I don't deny that, but you also have to consider the other person, right? For example, when you are offering somebody food, maybe he's already had his fill.

I tell people, "If you make ten dishes, put it out like a potluck. People can choose what they want. Don't force people to take more than they want."

I have a little story about that, too.

After getting married, a son-in-law is invited to his in-laws' home for a meal. It's the tradition. When the food is served, the first thing the son-in-law eats is the eggplant, aubergine, brinjal. Then he eats all the rest of his food.

The second time he visits the in-laws, eggplant is served again. Again, that's the first thing he eats.

The third time he comes, the fourth time he comes—every time eggplant is served.

The fifth time, he asks his mother-in-law, "Why is it that every time I come, you make eggplant?"

She says, "Son, I saw that it's the first thing you eat, so I figured that must be what you love most."

He says, "Let me tell you the truth. It's the one vegetable I don't like. I get rid of it on my plate so I can eat the things that I like."

Cooperation (continued)

She says, “You should have told me that the first time.”

He says, “Well, I’m just getting comfortable enough now to be able to tell you this.”

So, responsibility and cooperation need to be understood, to be figured out. Not everything is always said through the mouth. Not always does everything have to be expressed. It can be understood. I’m sure all of us sitting in this room are wise. I’m sure that we are not so blind that we can’t see, that we can’t understand.

I’ve pondered for the last few years how it is in this society, that when people aren’t affected directly by something, they say, “Why should I bother?”

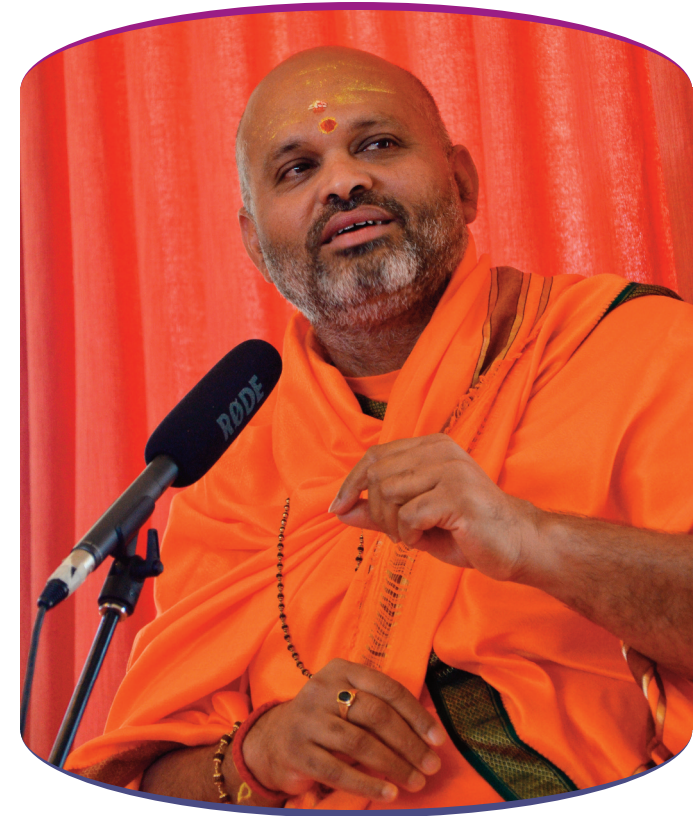
The sages prayed, “May *all* beings be content.” They could have said, “May I be content.”

When they said, “May all be free of sickness,” they could have said, “May I be free of sickness.” When they said, “May all see auspicious sights,” they could have said, “May I see auspicious sights.”

“May there be no suffering for anyone” could have been “May I never, ever, ever, ever suffer.”

“May I” is not the teaching. When you perform an action, don’t just think about yourself. Think big.

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Adaptability

The most important ingredient missing in our modern-day life is affection.

The third word is *adaptability*.

When we walked in, someone said, “The radio advised, ‘Go where there is air conditioning.’” Because it’s going to be hot. So he said, “Therefore we came to Shanti Mandir.”

In case you didn’t notice, we don’t have air conditioning. We have open doors, open windows. We have fans, mobile fans. The fan can go with us wherever we go. If we go to the living room, it can go with us. If we go to the kitchen, it can go with us. If we go to the gift shop, it could go there too.

As kids, we grew up with fans. Now everybody says, “Put the air conditioning on.” It’s easy. But if you read the news, you might have read recently that every air conditioner that gets turned on adds to the heat. It produces heat and pollutants outside the building.

Of course, we’re lucky here that we don’t have buildings right next to us. We can open up and let air flow in. But in cities such as Manhattan and Queens, and wherever else the buildings are right next to each other, the buildings create wind tunnels. The greed of real estate developers is such that they don’t think about what will happen to the neighbors when they put up a new building.

This goes back to the first word, responsibility. It goes back to the second word, cooperation. And it shows us we need to learn to adapt.

In India, villages are slowly dying out. In the US, we still have the village of Walden. The word *village* is still used.

I think villages will become more important in this world; they will become the way of the future. When I say a village, I’m thinking of an ashram, a community like what we have here. That concept can be developed so that families live together. They have a place of worship. They have a school. The community can give a wholesome experience for each individual.

There are many details that need to be worked out, but I think this will be a necessity for human beings within the next twenty to thirty years. Real estate developers will have to rethink how they develop tract housing and housing in general, because the most important ingredient missing in our modern-day life is affection. Not love, affection.

Baba Muktānanda, in his time, created what he created. We are here today, continuing on this tradition, continuing on these practices. And we have all these young people who are getting ready, who are thinking and wondering how we move on.

The sacred tradition, the teachings, and the practices have to be maintained. We cannot throw a new spin on them. They have to remain true to what was, what is, and what will be. We aren’t looking to adapt the teachings; there has to be consistency.

It is July 1 today. We’ve completed one half of this year 2018, which means we have completed seventeen and a half years of this twenty-first century.

Adaptability (continued)

A sage who has understood that his connection is really to the Divine, to the Truth, to Consciousness doesn't need any physical space to call home to feel whole.

“Where is the world going? Where is society going?” are questions asked by many. We don't know. It's going somewhere, that's for sure. Is it good or bad? I don't know.

I tell people again and again and again that the one quality the world is missing is affection.

They look at me as if they're wondering, “What do you mean?”

For those of you who want to understand what this means in spiritual terminology, I suggest you look up the twelfth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. It talks about devotion.

One of the words used by Lord Kṛṣṇa there is *homeless*.

In his commentary, Swami Chinmāyānanda explains this by saying, “Spending a night on the railway platform or in an airport does not make it home. What makes it home is how you feel within.”

A sage who has understood that his connection is really to the Divine, to the Truth, to Consciousness doesn't need any physical space to call home to feel whole. To him, all places are home. Wherever he goes, whomsoever he is with, is home.

Of course, this makes me think of Bhagavan Nityānanda, who spent most of his life free, not owning any place, not creating any place—except for the one ashram he created in South India. Then he left that ashram also, after he realized all of a sudden, “What have I done?”

Somebody must have told him, “Create a place.” So he created a place. And then he thought, “Oh my god, I'm bound.” So he left it and continued on in his freedom. When he came to Ganeshpuri and lived there for the last thirty years of his life, he lived freely. As soon as any place he was staying became controlling or limiting, he just moved to another place. Finally he moved to the place where he left his body.

Freedom comes over time. It's not easy. It's easy to say, “I'm going to be free.” You simply move something from the dining room to the living room or from the TV room to the den. And you say, “I'm becoming free of it.” You're not really becoming free of it. You're just manipulating it.

One word for contentment in Sanskrit is *sukha*. So, let us become *sukha*, content. Let us become comfortable within ourselves, or as you say in English, comfortable in our own skin.

You have to feel good. You have to feel complete. You have to feel whole. Only then can you share your goodness, your affection.

Thank you all for being here this morning.



G L O S S A R Y

Akbar

[1542-1605] Moghul emperor in India

Bhagavad Gītā

Hindu scripture

Birbal

King Akbar's prime minister

Chinmāyānanda, Swami

[1916–1993], wrote commentary on the

Bhagavad Gītā

Kṛṣṇa

Hindu deity, Gurū of Arjuna in the

Bhagavad Gītā

sarve

all

satsaṅg

in the company of the Truth

sukha

pleasure, contentment

