

Siddha Marg



लोकानन्दः समाधिसुखम्

The Śiva Sūtra Baba often talked about was Lokānandaḥ samādhi sukham, “The bliss of the world is the bliss of samādhi.” When you first hear this, you ask yourself, “How can external enjoyment be the same as immersion within?”

The scriptures say we must come to realize that the joy we experience doesn’t come from any object, it comes from within us. Therefore, you can have a thrill, you can have joy. But your awareness and understanding is there that it comes from within.

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 questions and answers selected from satsaṅgs held over the past two decades.

Bumping into the Self

QUESTION:

Baba often guided people to meditate on the Self, and I was wondering if you could talk about that because I find it a little confusing.

GURUDEV:

You’re not the only one. When people begin the process, it can be confusing. They tend to think of the Self as something they’re going to find. It’s as if they think, “One of these days while I’m meditating, I’m going to bump into the Self.”

But slowly you come to understand that you’re not actually going to run into anything. You come to realize that what you have to do is simply become aware of the Self.

When Baba talked about the Self, he also used the words Consciousness, śakti, and energy. The scriptures use the word ātman, or Self. People often think that means the Self is something that has a form. But as you sit and meditate, you realize you are not actually going to find a form or a thing. What you become aware of is just energy.

Baba often used the example of sleep. When you go to sleep, you are sleeping and you are unaware that you are sleeping. Yet when you wake up in the morning, something tells you, “I had a good night’s sleep.”

Bumping into the Self (continued)

You might ask, “Who is it that is awake when the body is asleep, and that afterwards knows it slept?” That is the one you want to know. To know the Self is to know the one who is awake when you are asleep.

If you understand that the Self is formless and that it is awareness, it is easier to find the Self just by taking a step back. You step back and watch what is happening within you. It is much the same, Swami Chinmayanānda says, as what is happening when you see a train moving, but you realize it is actually the steam from its engine that moves the train. Similarly, you see the blades of a fan turning. But the fan is not turning itself; electricity is turning the fan.

In the same way, you think, “I am moving,” but it’s not your body that is doing the moving. It is the energy within your body that makes it move.

To understand what the Self is, you have to go within yourself, beyond your thoughts, and beyond your logical way of looking at life. When you do that, you come to a place of silence. In that place, you find what Baba was talking about when he spoke about the Self.

QUESTION:

How can a person who has a form become aware of something that’s formless?

GURUDEV:

At some point, you become aware of the movement of energy. All of us live life, yet we don’t focus on the energy that actually moves us. We think, “I am moving, I am doing.” We have to come to the realization that it is the unseen energy that moves in us.

Again, I like to give the example of electricity. We see that a lamp is lit, but the lamp is not lit by itself. The lamp is lit by the unseen electricity that lights it. So each of us must have the understanding “I am just a form that moves and does. But what moves and does within me is the formless energy I can’t see.” Does that make sense?

QUESTION:

Yes. But doesn’t that energy also have form?

GURUDEV:

You might think it has form at some level. But for the purpose of this example, we don’t know it or see it as form. For example, we don’t see electricity. We feel it when we touch a live wire, but we don’t actually see it. Wind is another example. We don’t see wind, either. But we know that we can feel wind. In the same way, we don’t see energy, but we feel it. We feel it as heat or we feel its movement within us.

The same goes for love and joy. We don’t see love and joy, yet we feel love and joy. If somebody were to ask us to describe what the form of love looks like, I don’t think any one of us could say, “This is the form love takes.”

QUESTION:

I’ve heard references to the “sword of discrimination.” Does that mean they are really talking about energetic movements?

GURUDEV:

Discrimination is often referred to as a sword. A sword cuts. And you use discrimination to cut through ignorance. The image of a sword helps a person imagine that he can break through his fear or his limitations. You wonder, “How do I become free of something?” You just cut it.

To understand what the Self is, you have to go within yourself, beyond your thoughts, and beyond your logical way of looking at life.

Bumping into the Self (continued)

QUESTION:

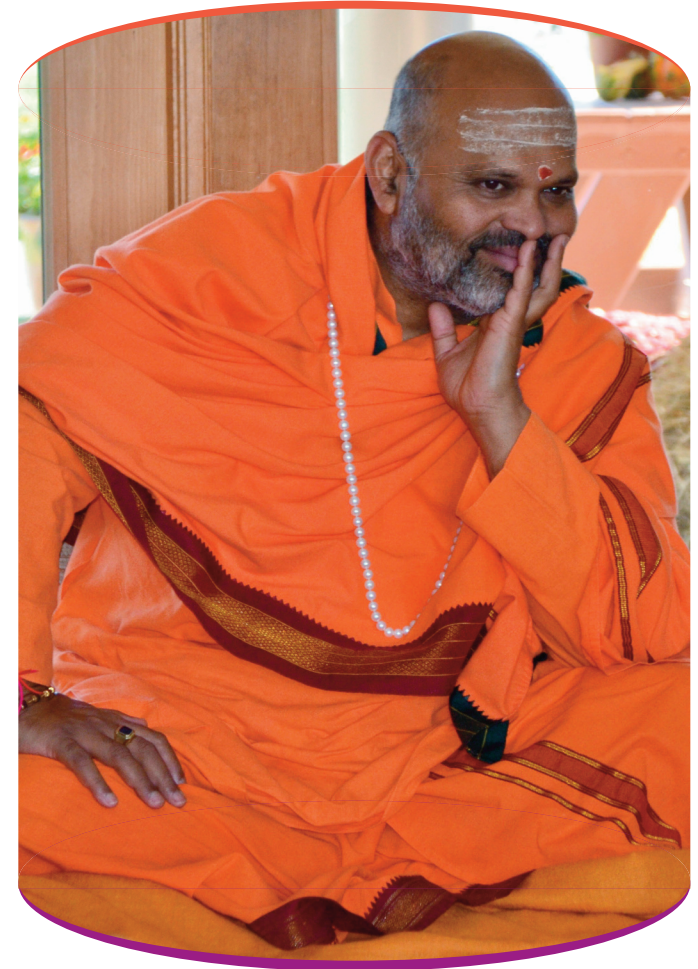
Could you explain what *ojas* is and how we need it?

GURUDEV:

Ojas is a vital energy within the body. If you study Āyurveda, they talk a lot about ojas and how you can create it. They tell you which foods to eat to create more ojas. You can generate ojas by eating the right foods and following the right practices. Meditation creates a lot of ojas. But it can take a while to get to the point where your meditation is generating a lot of ojas. So in the beginning, you can follow a diet that will create ojas.



**Ojas is a vital energy
within the body.**



Wherever You Go, You Go

QUESTION:

Do you feel there is a spiritual foundation to marriage?

GURUDEV:

I think in our society today, we tend to look for instant happiness, instant gratification, in relationships. At the same time, we think, “I’m not satisfied. But if I could just do this... or if I could just change that...” Instead of sticking to it and working it out, we move from one partner to the next. I think any relationship is a work in progress.

Whether it’s a friendship or it’s a marriage or it’s a parent and child or it’s a brother and sister, a relationship requires the same thing. One has to constantly have conversation, dialogue. And when a bond has been formed, if each individual honors that bond, then there is a sanctity and a purity in that relationship. But if partners constantly change and move on, there is no longevity, no security, in any relationship. In the back of their minds, there is always doubt; they are always wondering how long it will last.

For example, when it comes to the Guru-disciple relationship, many people think, “Okay, I’ll have many Gurus.” They don’t let themselves settle into the relationship.

You have to talk to your own mind. You have to work it all out within your own mind. Tell yourself, “Whatever problems I have here I’m also going to have somewhere

else.” Because, as I like to say, “Wherever you go, you go.” You bring yourself to all situations, so you might as well work out your problems where you are now.

When I think of my parents and people of that generation, it’s not that they didn’t have issues. They had issues. But they tried to resolve those issues. The husband and wife would say, “You’re not going anywhere, and I’m not going anywhere, so let’s solve this.”

You realize that the two of you are not going to change. So you learn how to accept the other person, and that person learns to accept you. Sometimes people are afraid of commitment. But there comes a point when you have to commit to each other.



When a bond has been formed, if each individual honors that bond, then there is a sanctity and a purity in that relationship.

The Natural State

QUESTION:

Gurudev, could you speak about transitioning from the subtlety and stillness that follow meditation back into activity, and also possibly the role of silence in that transition?

GURUDEV:

In all the years I've known you, I think that has probably been your biggest issue, right?

I think there's no answer, as such. When you go—as we all did just now—into deep meditation, and then bring yourself back, it takes great effort and clarity in the thought process. You have to tell yourself, “Okay. I've been in this experience. Now I have to come into the world of doing, of working.”

You have to come to the understanding that there is no difference between what you are experiencing within yourself and outside yourself. You have to learn to shut out all the chatter, all of everything that you see, and just operate from your space of silence and stillness.

It's only because the mind or the ego want to get involved in the chatter that you have trouble transitioning. If you can't easily make the transition, you can always just smile and walk by without having to engage in a conversation with anybody.

I think the biggest challenge is to learn to just be in the space we are in. Baba used to quote what Kabir said about his experience of natural *samādhi*. In *sahaja samādhi*, the natural state, you are able to be in *samādhi* within yourself, and at the same time in the external world.

What you have to work on now is to create the same stillness and awareness you experience in meditation also as you walk, as you work, and so on. It's not, “Oh dear, I have to work now.” You carry your stillness into the work you do.

QUESTION:

I just came from my daughter's primary school. I talked to them a little about meditation. I was wondering, what you can say to ten-year-olds to bring them into meditation?

GURUDEV:

You have to find an interesting way to keep them sitting. It's difficult enough to keep adults still. Start with a minute or two. Five minutes maximum. They can't do longer.

I would talk to them first about the value of being silent, and then take it from there. I think when we are aware of the value of silence, meditation becomes more interesting. So much noise permeates our society and life these days. We have to learn to turn off our phones, our iPods, and all of those things. That is the only way to really know what silence is.

Often when I go into people's homes, the television or music or some kind of media is on. We get so used to having noise in the background. So it's important to have a time and place to get away from that for a little bit. From a place of stillness, of silence, so much good can happen—good thoughts, good actions, and so on.

Of course, children have a lot of energy. If you talk about how they can do good things, then I think they can also find joy, find stillness, through doing those good actions.

Come to the understanding that there is no difference between what you are experiencing within yourself and outside yourself.

Daily Ritual

QUESTION:

In India, your students wash and dress the statue of Bhagavān every morning. Can you explain that?

GURUDEV:

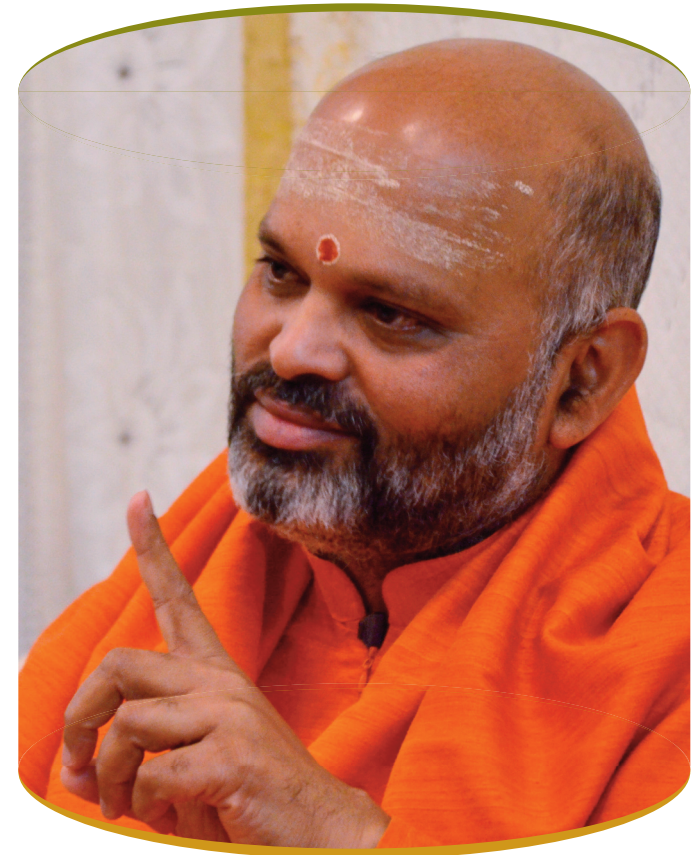
Just as we bathe and clothe ourselves each and every day, the Indian tradition believes we should bathe and clothe our chosen deity. In many Indian homes and temples, *abhiṣeka*, the bathing of the statue, is still done each morning. It is part of the daily ritual.

The full *abhiṣeka* is a sixteen-step process. The deity is invoked, the deity is seated, the deity is bathing, and so on. On special occasions, we offer milk, yogurt, ghee, sugar, and honey, which represent the five elements.

For me, the idea of *abhiṣeka* is to learn how to cleanse and purify oneself. This can be done through the repetition of a few mantras. As you listen to the Vedic mantras, or as you perform the *abhiṣeka*, you cleanse and purify your own mind.



When we are aware of the value of silence, meditation becomes more interesting.



G L O S S A R Y

abhiṣeka

ritual bathing of the image of a deity

ātman

the soul, Self

Āyurveda

the ancient Indian science of health

Bhagavān [Nityānanda]

Baba Muktānanda's Guru

Chinmāyānanda, Swami

[1916–1993], wrote commentary on the

Bhagavad Gītā

Kabīr

[1440-1518] poet-saint and weaver

ojas

vital energy

sahaja

natural

śakti

the creative energy of the universe;

the awakened spiritual energy

samādhi

union with the Absolute

satsaṅg

in the company of the Truth

Śiva Sūtras

9th c. text of Kashmir Shaivism

