



## लोकानन्दःसमाधिसुखम्

*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 excerpts from a talk Gurudev gave at an Intensive in Shanti Mandir Walden in November 2018.*

## The River Doesn’t Drink Its Own Water

It is with great respect and love that I would like to welcome everyone here this morning. Namaste!

The scriptures talk to us about learning, and about contemplating and imbibing what we learn. First we learn first by hearing or by reading. But the other two are even more important: contemplating and imbibing.

For example, if you jump in a lake, you will get wet. But if you wear a wetsuit—like you do when you go into the cold ocean—then you won’t get wet. Often, when we come to the Guru as seekers, it’s like we have a wetsuit in our mind. We don’t imbibe the teachings. We see the waves. We ride the waves. That’s easy enough. But the quality of imbibing—of actually getting wet—is the most difficult, I think.

That is because there’s already a “me,” there’s already an “I.” And that me, that I, is like a wetsuit that keeps us dry.

At every Intensive with Baba Muktaṇanda, one of the swamis would wave a coconut in the hall and then go out and break it. Often the first speaker would say, “You saw the coconut being waved. The idea is to break the coconut because its hard shell represents the ego. Within that shell is the sweet water, the delicious fruit of the coconut, the inner Self.”

## The River Doesn't Drink Its Own Water (continued)

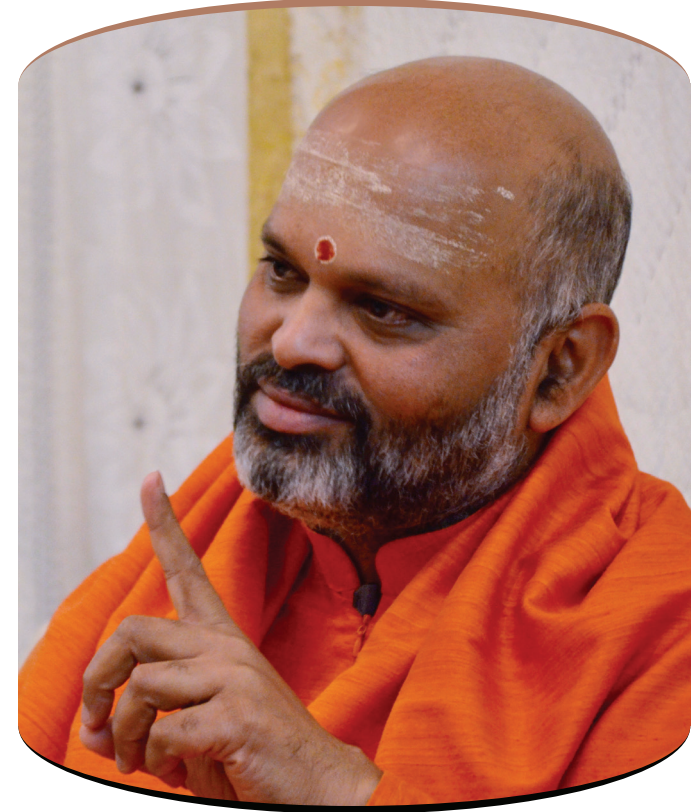
Because of all that has happened in our lives, we feel vulnerable when we break open the coconut, the ego. At different times, we may have opened ourselves, but society being what it is, we then closed up again.

As you listen, contemplate, and imbibe, this begins to make sense. You come to a place within where, whether you're being praised or you're being criticized, you are not affected by either. I know it's not easy to do. But slowly, the flame within rises more and more and more. And then you go out into this world as light.

There is a Sanskrit verse that says, "The river never drinks its own water. The tree never eats its own fruit. He who gives his body, mind, and wealth in charity to others is a real human being."

We always hear the last part: benefit others, act for the upliftment of others. A great person always thinks, "What can I do that will uplift?"

**A great person always thinks, "What can I do that will uplift?"**



# Give What You Want to Get

**Noble people live for the purpose of giving.**

As we think about upliftment, we can also think about karma yoga. Karma yoga is the yoga of action.

In the modern-day world, we are told to act, to be a doer. But the sages tell us to act with a purpose. Activity, action, should have a goal.

Recently, somebody asked me, “Do you think I should always have a purpose?”

I said, “If you have no purpose, you’ll be like a hamster. Your actions will have no output, no fruits, or no results.”

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa is trying to convince Arjuna that doing is important. Arjuna asks, “Should I do, or should I not do?”

Kṛṣṇa tells him, “Arjuna, it is your duty to perform the action.”

If you have a human body, if you have a life, then perform actions. But don’t think about what you will get if you perform that action. That’s how we mostly do things. We think, “If I have worked eight hours, I need to be paid for eight hours. I have given you this much, so I should get this much back.”

When parents raise a child, they are always saying, “Look at all we have sacrificed to raise you! Therefore, we expect you to give us back that which we have given.”

And the child says, “I never asked you to bring me onto this earth. I never told you I wanted a human form. It was you,

out of your own desire, who created me. And then, as good parents, you took care of me and raised me. You did what was your duty.”

An example that is used in the scriptures is the sandalwood tree. Sandalwood is cooling. I put sandalwood paste on my forehead, and we also put it on these statues. I especially like the quality and fragrance of sandalwood that is grown in the southern part of India.

It is said, “A sandalwood tree does not grow for its own comfort.” It gives comfort to others when it is applied to the body. It is the same with noble people. They live for the purpose of giving.

In our society, we always think, “What will I get? How will I benefit?” Yet today I am only talking about the opposite: “How I can give?”

In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, Nāciketa’s father has a fire ceremony. In those days, the tradition was to give a cow to each brahmin. India was an agricultural country, so everybody had bulls, cows, and so on.

Nāciketa’s father thinks, “I’ll give all my old cows.” In other words, those that can’t have babies, that can’t give milk.

Young Nāciketa is upset. He wants his father to give away possessions with some value so his sacrifice will be meaningful. So he says, “I also belong to you. To whom will you give me?” He asks this two or three times.

## Give What You Want to Get (continued)

His father gets angry and says, “I give you to the Lord of Death!”

The whole *Upaniṣad* is based on the conversation that takes place between Nāciketa and the Lord of Death. Nāciketa is upset because he thought he had a good father.

We see the same situation in India today. When you go to a shop and say, “I want these things,” the shopkeeper asks, “Is this for a *pūjā*?”

You say, “Yes.”

He says, “Okay, I’ll give you this old box.” The old box contains all the cheap stuff that doesn’t sell in his shop.

I tell people, “When you want to give, think of what you want to get.”

I often share a story that explains the concept of giving very well. A *sādhū* comes to town. A woman wants her son to have children. It is a tradition that when you come to a holy man, you never come empty handed. You come with something. And then you receive his blessings, and you take home the fruit of that blessing.

So the woman brings the *sādhū* some bananas. As she was buying the bananas, the shopkeeper said, “This bunch is so many rupees, and this other bunch is so many rupees. And the really ripe ones are the cheapest.” So she bought those.

She puts them in front of the *sādhū*. He blesses her. And she goes home.

A couple of years later, she has grandkids. They are a little disabled. So she waits for the *sādhū* to come back to town, which he does.

When she sees him, she says, “I came to you with bananas, and I asked for blessings. I was blessed. But the children are a little disabled.”

The *sādhū* says, “And how were the bananas?”



**When you want to give,  
think of what you want  
to get.**

# Ripen as You Age

**“What good deeds have I done today?”**

The scripture says, “The sun sets every day, taking away part of our lifespan.” Every day the sun sets, it’s one less twelve-hour day. In the summer, it’s a little bit more. Winters are a little bit less. But in the Indian tradition, we believe it’s a twelve-hour day, from sunrise to sunset.

Some part of your life is gone when the sun has set. So you should contemplate every day, “What good deeds have I done today?”

In the ancient culture, all that was to be done was done from sunrise to sunset. From sunrise to sunset, there was light, there was daytime. That was the time to give and take. And once the sun set, boom! No more business to be conducted. Everybody went home. Everybody stayed inside because it was dark outside. That was the time to pray, meditate, chant, be with family, eat, sleep.

I tell people that our elders teach us many things, if we want to learn. Good elders, that is. Because we have bad elders, too. The good elders teach us good things.

We all will be elders someday. All of us should slowly ripen as we age. When a fruit is ripe, three things can happen to it. First, when you see most fruit ripen, its color changes. Second, it becomes soft as it ripens. And finally, it becomes sweet, it becomes delicious.

As each individual matures, or ripens, there may not be a visible change of color in his or her skin. But the person’s nature, or way of being, changes. The person becomes gentler.

The Gujarati poet-saint Narsinh Mehta wrote a poem that Mahatma Gandhi used to sing a lot. In it, he says, “He is called a person of God who understands the pain and the suffering of others. There is no trace of ego when he wants to help someone.”

Here’s a story I read. One day it is raining, and a teacher is inside teaching his class. He asks his students, “If I were to give you a hundred rupees, what would you do with it?”

Different children answer different things. Today, if students were asked that question, one would say, “I will buy a video game.” Another would say, “I’ll buy Nintendo.” Or “I’ll buy a baseball bat.” Or “I’ll buy a cricket bat.” Or “I’ll buy chocolate.”

One child, however, is lost in thought.

The teacher says to him, “What are you thinking?”

He says, “I think I’ll buy my mother a pair of glasses.”

The teacher says, “Why do you want to do that?”

He says, “I don’t have a father. My mother is the one who takes care of the family, and she sews for a living. That’s how I can come to school. So if I buy her glasses, she’ll be able to see better. She’ll stitch better, and she’ll have more sales. We’ll all live more comfortably.”

The teacher goes up to him, gives him the hundred rupees, and says, “This is a loan. Whenever in life you have the ability to do so, come back and return this hundred rupees.”



## Ripen as You Age (continued)

Almost twenty years go by in the story. Again, it's raining—I think the storyteller likes rain. In India, we have districts, like you have towns here. The highest person in a district in India is the district collector. He's in charge of many legal things. So at this school, on this rainy day, along comes the district collector's car, with its red light.

Everybody in the school is a little worried when they see the car. They wonder whether they have done something wrong that caused the officer to come to their school.

The car stops. The collector gets out and goes up to the teacher, who is now twenty years older. He says, "I'm the boy to whom you gave a hundred rupees twenty years ago. You told me to come back when I was able to return it."

The teacher is very happy. He picks up the collector, who's bowing at the feet, and hugs him.

The storyteller tells us, "Become famous, but not arrogant. Be simple, but don't be weak." Life changes very quickly. Even an emperor sometimes becomes a beggar. And sometimes a beggar becomes an emperor.

**Become famous,  
but not arrogant.**



# Three Qualities of Giving

**Pain and suffering arise only when we have attachment.**

In the seventeenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa talks about *sāttva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, the three different qualities. Kṛṣṇa says giving has the qualities of *sāttva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*.

We think, “I am just giving.” Even the act of giving falls under these three qualities.

Kṛṣṇa says, “That which is given, knowing it to be a duty, at the proper time and place, to a worthy person from whom we expect nothing, is considered *sāttvic*.”

Many organizations have the names of their donors on the buildings. At Shanti Mandir, we’ve always prayed that blessings will come, goodness will come, without a name plate. When we built Namaste, some of the windows were on the expensive side. Somebody said, “I’ll donate, but I need a name plate on the window.” I didn’t think that would quite fit. Fortunately, God was kind, and somebody else came along and donated the windows, without asking for a name plate.

This is what Kṛṣṇa is talking about here: “That which is given to the right person, at the right time, in the right place, without any expectation of return.” That’s *sāttvic* giving, pure giving.

When you really think about it, that’s how it works in life. Nothing is really ours to keep, because it was never ours to begin with. It’s only there for as long as it is, and then it moves on.

The scriptures tell us pain and suffering arise only when we have attachment.

A tree gives its fruits. It does not make any distinction between who will enjoy the fruits and who will not. Somebody may even cut down the tree from which he has eaten the fruit. But even knowing that may happen, the tree still gives its fruit. We can also give like that.

The rajasic type, Kṛṣṇa says, is “a gift that is given with the view to receiving something in return, or given while looking for the fruit, or given reluctantly.”

Many of our gifts given during the course of everyday, worldly activity fall under this category. In the United States, people celebrate Black Friday. Here, we had Pink Friday yesterday. Somebody gives us a gift. And now we feel obligated to return one that is 125 percent of the original gift. You received a pillow this big, so you think, “I can’t give back a pillow of the same size. I have to give one that’s a bit bigger.” Which then creates a dilemma for the other person. Next Christmas, he has to figure out how big a pillow to give in return.

The last one is the tamasic type. Kṛṣṇa says it is “a gift given in the wrong place, at the wrong time, by an unworthy person, without respect, with insult.”

It’s like, “Here, take it!” We do that sometimes when we’re angry or upset.

## Three Qualities of Giving (continued)

A man is told by an astrologer that he must donate a gold coin, and that gold coin will solve his problem. But the gold coin can only be given to a priest who does *trikāla sandhyā*. In India, priests pray in the morning at sunrise, pray at noon, and pray at night. It's their personal prayer and it's called *trikāla sandhyā*.

To find a priest today who does even one prayer is difficult. Finally, this man finds one elderly priest. So he goes to him and gives him the gold coin.

The priest gives his blessing to the man from whom he takes the gold coin. He does this by making a prayer, an intention, as he pours water over the coin. It is said that when he lets go of the water, the skin on his hand that touched the gold coin is burned.

He has given the *punya*, the merit, of his *sandhyā*, to that man. In exchange for what he has given, he has taken on the man's karma through that gold coin.

What we're talking about is subtle shifts, subtle movements, subtle energy, that cannot be seen through the physical eyes, that cannot be heard through the physical ears. When traditional Indian priests give you *prasād*, they give it to you like this. There is no touching. When you become sensitive, you start to feel that static electricity. Otherwise, you feel nothing.

Today, we share straws, we share spoons, we share forks, we share food from plates, without thinking much about it. We tell ourselves, "It's just food." But when you're taking something from someone else, there is a shift, a movement of energy.

How much of *sāttva*, how much of *rajas*, and how much of *tamas* is there inside your physical body is something you need to think about. Nobody else can do it for you. There is no thermometer you can buy, unfortunately, to tell you. I wish there was. Then you could just put it in your mouth and say, "Okay, I'm *sāttvic*." Or "I'm *rajasic*." Or "I'm *tamasic*."

Maybe when we started, you thought you were only going to hear that "the river doesn't drink its own water, and the tree doesn't eat its own fruit." But how does the tree not eat its own fruit? How does the river not drink its own water? What does that mean for us?

The answer is in our actions, the effort we put forth. We all put forth effort. The tree is putting forth the effort of creating the fruit. The river is still running. Our effort to give cannot make us bound. It cannot bind us. Our effort has to free us. Our learning must lead us to liberation. The knowledge, the wisdom, we gather has to lead us to liberation. Otherwise, our action only brings exertion.



**Our learning must lead  
us to liberation.**



## G L O S S A R Y

**Arjuna**a warrior, hero of the *Bhagavad Gītā****Bhagavad Gītā***

Hindu scripture

***Kaṭha Upaniṣad***

a scripture

**Kṛṣṇa**Hindu deity, Guru of Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gītā***Mehta, Narsinh**

[15th c] Gujarati poet-saint

**Nāciketa**boy hero of *Kaṭha Upaniṣad***namaste**

I offer my salutations to the divine within you.

**prasād**

blessed gift

**pūjā**

worship

**punya**

merit

**rajas**

the quality of passion

**sādhū**

a mendicant

**samādhi**

union with the Absolute

**sandhyā**

transitions, dawn and dusk

**sāttva**

the quality of purity

**Śiva Sūtras**

9th c. text of Kashmir Shaivism

**tamas**

the quality of darkness and inertia

**trikāla**

three times

