

Siddha Marg



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 Saraswati, to share his ruminations on and expression of the universal philosophy. This issue features excerpts from a talk Gurudev gave at an Intensive in Kauai, Hawaii, in April 2019.

Rewind the Tape of Life

With great respect and love, I welcome everyone to the Intensive here today.

Meditators always ask, “What do I do with my thoughts?”

I tell them, “At least you recognize that you have thoughts.” Because many people live upon this earth never realizing, “I have thoughts.” Just as water is wet and fire is hot, so too does the mind have thoughts. That is the nature of the mind.

So it’s not a question of getting rid of all thoughts, but rather of having uplifting thoughts, noble thoughts, thoughts that will benefit us. We want to have thoughts that will benefit everyone else as well.

When we think of peace, of quiet, of silence, we realize that what the sages want us to get rid of is not the mind but our sense of “I.” In the world in which we live, the sense of “I” is a very important factor we develop throughout life. So a sage simply tells us to become bigger.

The philosophy of Shaivism talks about the three *malas*, the impurities in the life of a human being. These malas veil our perception. They prevent us from seeing the Truth.

The grossest, or least subtle, is *karma* mala, which refers to the actions we perform in life.

When we lived with Baba Muktānanda, we had *satsaṅg* every day. At the ashram in New York, the hall where we had *satsaṅg* had doors that swung open and closed. We were about a thousand people in that hall.

Rewind the Tape of Life (continued)

**The free will you
have is how you choose
to react.**

So you can imagine, we have just finished a wonderful evening chant. You are in a state of bliss. You're a little bit spaced out as you walk out of the hall, and the person ahead of you lets go of the door. The door slams, and your fingers get caught.

Your mind tells itself, "John always wanted to do that to me. I've been watching him the last few days while we've been here at the ashram, and I know he's trying to get me!"

The mind begins this process, and somehow you end up in the serving line, right behind John. In the ashram in those days, you were served soup, salad, and bread. Soup, I think, was always the first dish. So there you are with your tray. Your mind is lost in "How do I get even? How do I get back at John?"

Here on these two-lane highways on Kauai, people are so busy going straight that they forget to look out for the person who wants to turn left. In the same way, as you have your soup on your tray, you forget to notice that the person in front of you has stopped. And that person is John, of course. You bump right into him, and your soup goes all over him. It's hot, it's burning, it's boiling.

Now let's just go back; let's rewind the tape. The soup goes back in the bowl, back in the pot. You're back at the door of the hall, where all this began. You're in that spacey, happy, excited, ecstatic state. This time, the door slams and catches your finger, and you simply go, "That's karma. I must have done something, and now it is part of the package of this life."

You get some ice and put it on your finger, and you resolve the situation then and there. You don't continue it for moments, days, months, years. You simply end it there.

People ask, "If that door was destined to slam and hit me, what free will do I have?"

The free will you have is how you choose to react when you find yourself in that situation. Often it's only after the

fact that we realize we could have made a different choice. The philosophy of Shaivism tells us we have a choice in the moment about how we can react when we experience karma mala. Avoiding a reaction is choice number one

Karma mala happens for each and every one of us in life. The degree may vary, but something happens to all of us. Shaivism says that moment is where a shift can take place. In modern terms, we talk about how to "respond" rather than "react." Don't do anything. Just resolve the situation within yourself.

When somebody falls down, or something happens, we have a tendency to go to that person and say, "How are you? What happened?"

That person enjoys the attention he or she is now getting. Even if it isn't a big deal, the person feels, "I can use this opportunity to say more about what happened. I will get some nice treatment as a result." The person forgets that all this does is create more karma. Instead just say, "Thanks for asking, I'm okay."

We see this with children. A child falls down. If we don't look, the child gets up and goes back to playing again. But suppose we go to the child and say, "Oh, are you hurt?"

The child says, "Yeah! Look at this!"

The child plays along with us, and we play along with the child. The child thinks he is fooling the adult, the adult thinks he's fooling the child. This is how life goes on.

When we face karma, we think, "How did I, such a good person, end up like this?" That's how we think of ourselves, right? "I'm the perfect person God created. How did I end up in this mess?"

We have to slowly rewind the tape of life.



Soft as Butter

From the perspective of Consciousness, the waking state and the dream state and the deep sleep state are all unreal.

People often tell me, “If I knew what I did in the lifetime before, then maybe I could be a better person now.”

I say, “Forget the past lifetime. Just look at this lifetime and what you have done in it.”

You don’t need anyone else to remind you of what you have done in this lifetime. You can’t just say, “I forgot yesterday.” We all remember our yesterdays. We remember the days before, the months, the years. We have lots of flashbacks. We have dreams.

We wonder, “What was that dream?”

A dream is nothing but a reflection of that which we have done in the waking state. Baba says, “Just as the waking state is real to us when we are awake, a dream is real to us when we are in the dream state.” The dream state feels just as real as when we are in the waking state.

Of course, from the highest viewpoint, both are unreal. From the perspective of Consciousness, the waking state and the dream state and the deep sleep state are all unreal. But as long as we are in those three states, they are real for us.

Ultimately, it’s a play of the mind.

The second mala that Shaivism talks about is *ānava* mala. The mind thinks to itself, “I am incomplete.”

From what I can see, most coaching classes, or self-promotion classes, these days are all about thinking, “I am able to,” “I can,” “It’s possible.” Whenever you run into a difficult situation, rather than thinking, “No, I can’t do it,” just tell yourself, “It’s possible.”

However, somewhere along the way, the human mind gets the idea, “I am imperfect.” Baba would say that the biggest mistake a human can make is to think this. He would sing, “I am Consciousness. I am Bliss. I am Śiva. I am the Absolute. I am perfect. I am complete. I am whole.”

I would make a distinction here. There is an ego-driven sense of perfection, and there is a non-ego-driven sense of perfection. The ego-driven conviction “I’m perfect” is pushy. You have to reconfirm it to yourself and to others. And it hurts sometimes. Because you aren’t really sure if you’re quite so perfect.

But when it’s Consciousness-driven, it is the sense of “I am Perfect.” Then it has the softness of butter. Tukārām Mahārāj describes it as butter, but he also says it is like a diamond.

In society, we see people we think we would like to be like, because they seem successful in the external world. But along with that success comes a hardness. But then think of the great sage who dwells in the experience “I am the Self.” There is a softness, a gentleness, a joy. We experience that softness when we chant, when we meditate, when we are in that inner space.

That experience, I always feel, is beyond words. We feel it, we experience it, we know it. But then somebody asks, “Can you describe what you feel?” And we have no words. A word is simply a word, and a word can only go so far.



The Salt Doll

Constantly ask yourself,
“How can I remain
steady?”

Jñāneśvar Mahārāj tells us a doll made of salt goes to the ocean to find out how deep it is. What happens?

It dissolves.

We think to ourselves, “I want to see, I want to know, I want to experience Consciousness.” When we come to that place of Consciousness, the sense of “I”—of ego, of separation, of duality—must dissolve. There is no one left to come back and say what that experience was like.

The third mala, *māyīya* mala, is the sense “I am separate.”

When each of us sits today, all we want to do is to go into the ocean of Consciousness and dissolve. We want to be free of *māyīya* mala.

You don’t have to worry about all the basic functions. That’s the question many people ask: “If I dissolve, how will life continue?”

Baba would say, “Dissolve first, and then you can worry about that.”

People ask, “If I get liberated, what do I do about my life?”

I tell them, “Okay, what happens when you die? Life goes on for others. Nobody stops, nobody pauses, except maybe for a day or a few days. But then you become a memory. Life goes on. So in liberation, it’s the same: life will continue for you and continue for others.”

Baba said, “Through intense, deep meditation, you reach a state that is beyond thought, beyond change, beyond imagination, beyond differences, and beyond duality. Once

you can stay in that state for a while, and can come out of it without losing any of it, then the inner divine love will begin to pour through you. You will not see people as different, as separate individuals. You will see your own Self in everyone around you.”

Each of us, in our meditation, can reach that state beyond thought, beyond imagination, beyond change, beyond differences, beyond duality. But to come out of it and not lose any of it? I think that is the challenge.

The philosophy of Shaivism tells us this whole world is a stage upon which all of us are actors. So we begin to think and see and look: Who am I in the morning, when I’m at home getting ready? Who am I as I’m driving to work? Who am I when I’m at work? Who am I at happy hour? Who am I with friends? Who am I at dinner? Who am I when I go to sleep? Am I the same from the time I wake up and all through the day or are there shifts and changes? Are there movements?

As seekers, we want to become aware: Why do I feel wonderful at times? Why am I miserable at times? Why am I anxious at times? Why am I fanatic at times? Why...?

We put on all of these different roles and masks. Why can’t we simply be steady?

This is the contemplation you need to do. Constantly ask yourself, “How can I remain steady? How can I remain stable? How can I remain in equilibrium and not allow things to affect me?”

The Salt Doll (continued)

Vedānta talks about duality. In life, we have that which gives us pleasure. And if we think about that which gives us pleasure, then the opposite is there ready to give us pain. If we get caught in deriving pleasure, then pain exists.

Brahmānanda Mahārāji used to explain that we have teeth. When we use them to eat an apple, they give us pleasure. We go to the dentist and we get them cleaned. If somebody comes to punch us in the face, we protect ourselves and say, “No, no, no, I need my teeth to eat my apple! It’s giving me pleasure!”

Time goes by in life. One day you go to the dentist and pay him to remove your tooth. Because now it’s hurting, it’s giving you pain. Before, somebody offered to punch it out for free, and you said, “No, no, no!” But some years later in life, you go to the dentist and say, “Please remove this tooth, it’s no longer giving me pleasure.”

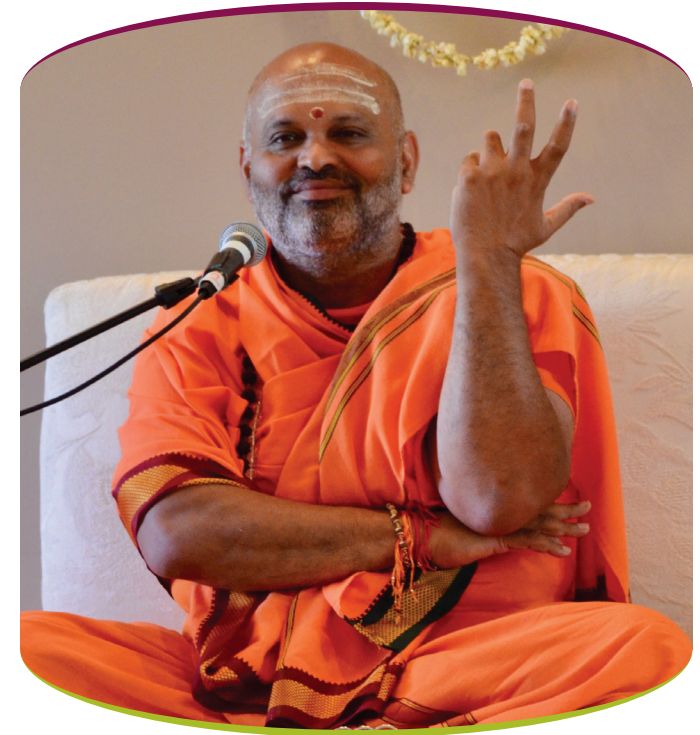
It is said, “The attachment to one thing causes an automatic aversion to something else.”

When Baba talked about his Guru, Bhagavan Nityānanda, he said, “He loved nobody, but he loved everybody.” Every time I heard that, it dazzled my mind. I thought, “Wow!” Because, in a way, when you first hear it, it’s a contradiction. How can you love nobody and yet love everybody?

That is where the mind has to go so that it doesn’t get caught in “I like, and therefore I don’t like” and “I love, and therefore I don’t love” and “I have pleasure, and therefore automatically I don’t have pleasure” and “I’m attracted to, and so therefore automatically there is an aversion.”

How do we bring about stability in the mind so it doesn’t do that?

Baba said, “Be as deep as the ocean. Be as steady as a mountain.” Become established in wisdom, in knowledge,



in the indestructible treasure of the teachings. The mind has to be constantly centered in supreme Consciousness. Never lose courage.

The sages instruct us to use the teachings, to apply the teachings, to benefit from the teachings. Don’t become a coward and say, “No! I’m going to forget the teachings for now. Right now, I’ll just be *me*.”

Nor do you need to constantly tell everyone, “I am established in supreme Consciousness! It’s from this place of supreme Consciousness that I am telling you so!” The *Upaniṣads* say that if you have to put your knowledge on display like that, know that you don’t know anything.



“Be as deep as the ocean. Be as steady as a mountain.”

Not the Doer

**Darśan is about seeing
Consciousness.**

Bhagavan Nityānanda sat quietly in Ganeshpuri for the last thirty-some years of his life. Thousands came to see him, yet he almost never said a word. I ask myself: what did they get in his presence? He didn't give you anything, and you didn't take anything. Yet, in that non-knowing, non-saying, nothing happening, so much happened.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* says, "I am not the doer."

We hear that and we say, "Okay, I'm not the doer!" But it doesn't work that way, because you are still thinking, "I (the doer) am not the doer." Think about it. It's just playing with your own mind. It's a play of the three malas, those veils. If you are not doing, you are not doing, so why do you have to tell yourself that you are not doing?

I met a *sādhū* in Mumbai. When he found out I'm from the lineage of Bhagavan Nityānanda, he asked, "Did you meet him?"

I said no.

He said, "Let me tell you a story. I went to Ganeshpuri in the 1950s. I'd heard a great sage was living there. When I arrived, there was a long line for *darśan*. Looking ahead, I could see this man lying down, facing the wall."

He said, "I paused and I said to myself, 'Why would I want to see the back of somebody?'" He meant that he wanted a

proper greeting, a real recognition. When people go to meet a great sage, they expect the great sage to welcome them with open arms, to say, "O dear one, I have been waiting for you!"

The *sādhū* said, "But I thought, 'So many thousands come here, and I've heard of him, why don't I just go with the flow?' So I stood in line, I went up. And just as I got to him, he turned. Our eyes met. I was elated that my wish had been fulfilled."

He said, "Then I walked away, and my mind thought, 'Maybe he just turned because he was tired of lying the other way.' But I turned to look, and he was already facing the wall again. So I thought, 'Maybe he is a great sage.'"

In the Indian tradition, *darśan* literally means "to see." In Baba's time, people saw a man with peacock feathers, they saw him giving talks, meeting people. Or in the case of Bhagavan Nityānanda, they saw a man not doing anything, just lying there, or sitting or walking.

We have to think about what we really want to see. *Darśan* is not about the man, it's not about the human, it's not about the person. *Darśan* is about seeing Consciousness. It is not something seen by the physical eyes or any of the senses, but something we feel within.

When you think of last night in the temple, you might say the chanting was wonderful. You might say the space

Not the Doer (continued)

was wonderful. You might say the statue of Bhagavan was wonderful. But what happens on the physical level is not as important as what happens in the deeper level within us. All of us were together in that same vibrating Consciousness. At least for that period of time, we were inside that cave.

So as we sit here, allow yourself to be quiet, to be still, to become steady, to ponder, “What brings me here? What do I want out of this day?” Don’t let it be just at a superficial, intellectual level; let it be a direct experience that you feel, that is real, that’s palpable, that’s true. And not because somebody else in the room said it, and therefore you agree with it—that’s indirect knowledge, inference. Let it become your own direct experience, so that no matter who does what or says what, you are deep like the ocean, steady like a mountain, because you have had your own experience of Consciousness.



**Let it become
your own direct
experience.**



G L O S S A R Y

Bhagavad Gītā

Hindu scripture

darśan

vision of the divine, experienced in the presence
of a holy being

Jñāneśvar Mahārāj

[13th c.] poet-saint of Maharashtra

mala

one of three veils, or impurities
(ānava, māyīya, karma)

sādhū

a mendicant

satsaṅg

in the company of the Truth

Shaivism

philosophy based on the idea that all is
Consciousness

Śiva

Hindu deity, the primordial Guru

Tukārām Mahārāj

[1608-1650] saint

Upaniṣad

Vedānta scripture

Vedānta

philosophy based on the *Vedas*