

Siddha Marg



गुरुपायः

We can try to understand the scriptures, we can even get a degree from the university, but the problem remains: how to achieve the direct experience of Truth? So the Śiva Sūtras say, gurur upāyah, “the Guru is the means.”

We take refuge at the feet of the Sadguru, and through that we attain true knowledge. This tradition has come down through the ages. God Himself was the first Guru, who transmitted this knowledge. The tradition of Sadgurus has continued, and so also has the tradition of disciples.

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

From Darkness to Light

QUESTION:

You said everything out there is a reflection of the inner light. If that’s the case, can those of us who feel more at home in the sleep state stay in that state half the day and make progress? If we never wake up early, can’t we still reach this inner light?

GURUDEV:

You’ve put me in a quandary now.

I’m a person who’s always woken up early. Even as a child, I loved getting up early. I’ve shared before that, as a child, I liked going to the morning *ārati*, which began a little before 4:00 a.m., and playing the gong. All the so-called big shots were at the evening *ārati*, so there was less chance of being able to play the gong then. The chance was greater in the morning because the big shots were supposedly meditating.

I think the ease with which we are able to get up early is a matter of practice and habit. If you make a practice of getting to bed early, automatically your body wakes up early. No matter how much people complain about it, I think the body is your best friend. When you train it the right way, it will work with you.

Science claims that one can reset the circadian clock within the body. And we humans mess with it a lot. I travel frequently, and my sleep patterns do get disturbed. I have found that no matter how much I sleep during the daytime, I am never as rested as I am

From Darkness to Light (continued)

when I sleep at night. So wherever we go, I try to stay awake throughout the day and try to get to bed early.

When we stay up late, we throw our internal clock off. Then we think, “I’ll just get up later and I’ll be more rested.” But in all my years of experience, I’ve found that if I get up later, I’m no more rested than I’d be if I went to bed early and got up after six hours.

Of course, I advise people who are falling sick or whose body is physically tired that a good twenty-four hour period of lying in bed is excellent. When the physical body rests, it recuperates itself.

The best example is a dog. When it is sick, it doesn’t eat. It just lies there. No matter how much you, as the owner, tell it, “We want to go for a walk. We want to go out. I want you to eat,” the dog doesn’t respond.

Think about what you’re really hiding from when you want to just sleep. You are running away from the world you don’t want to face. On good days, you think, “I’m excited to face the world. I’m excited to see what the world is going to offer.” But on not-so-exciting days, you think, “I don’t want to face the world, I don’t want to deal with the world. I want to run away from the world.” But then you realize there’s nothing to run away from. Ultimately whatever it is will have to be faced, to be dealt with, anyway. So better deal with it now and get it over with so you can move on.

We don’t have to close our eyes to feel the oneness, the vastness. We can have our eyes open and feel the vastness, too. All of this is simply a matter of training our own mind. As each of us trains our mind, it will see in the way we have trained it to see.

Plato says, “A sensible man will remember that the eyes may be confused in two ways: by a change from light to darkness or from darkness to light. And he will recognize that the same thing happens to the soul.”

When you walk from the other room into the temple, where it’s dark, you have to stop for a moment to make sure you put your foot on the right steps. And the same if you go from the dark in here directly to the outside world.

If you watch the people under the lights of Broadway in New York City—or in any city around the world—you realize that they are running around looking for reflected happiness. They think they will find happiness in the lights around them.

There’s a story about a man who tries to avoid his own shadow. The light behind him is creating that shadow, but he thinks the shadow is chasing him. The sage says, “All he had to do was turn the light so it was in front of him, and the shadow would fall behind him. Then he wouldn’t have to run away from his shadow.”

Likewise, you begin to realize you’re running around looking for the light in the outer world, and therefore a shadow is being cast. All you have to do is become aware of the light within. Then that shadow will cease to exist. And you will be able to sit down.

I recently read that when a person has become satisfied, contented within, he then just sits down. But if he is not satisfied or contented, he is continually running, looking for satisfaction.

So change the way you perceive your situation. It’s not that you have to close your eyes or that you have to sleep

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From Darkness to Light (continued)

late or that you have to do any of those things for the sake of happiness. Instead, just bring joy into your life; make it apparent.

A Chinese proverb says, “Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”

We were discussing this last night. I said to somebody, “Go turn the lights on.”

He said, “Most days of the week, we don’t have those lights on.”

I said, “People who come from the city are so used to lights that when they come to the country, they think, ‘Oh my God, it’s dark.’”

It’s not actually dark; we just don’t have as many lights. Mostly, we tell people to bring their own flashlight when they come to the ashram. It’s simpler. Some people make sure that a flashlight travels with them. Other people think, “It’s your job to give me a flashlight.” For a while, we used to have a basket of flashlights. I think it even had a label: “Property of Shanti Mandir,” right?

This is how we train our eyes, train our mind, train ourselves. These things happen in phases, and at some point, you realize you know and understand. As you hear more and more and more, you realize that what is important is that you create discipline in your life. Discipline is what brings us the fruit of *sādhanā*.

When you talk to a farmer or to people who take care of animals or to anyone who has created schedules, they will tell you they love it. Of course, I’m sure there are days when the mind thinks, “I wish the alarm wouldn’t ring today. Maybe I should get somebody else to do my job.”

You’re sitting next to a mother of two daughters right now who probably thinks on some mornings, “The kids should get up and do everything to get ready, and I’ll meet them at the breakfast table.” Of course, the kids are probably thinking the same thing: “We’ll just meet you at the breakfast table.” But they can only meet at the breakfast table if everybody has done what needs to be done.

In the ashram in Magod, we have a ceremony that takes place each morning. I tell the students that if a person is delayed by a few moments, then everything else throughout the day is delayed. If that person begins the day on time, then everything else also happens on time.

If you look on the web, you can find the exact time when the sun will rise. And the sun will rise at that time. Even if there are clouds, it will still rise; you just won’t see it. I think we should all become as predictable as that. Actually, we are already predictable. We may think we are not, but we are.



Discipline is what brings us the fruit of *sādhanā*.

Unbroken Love

QUESTION:

Would you talk about *darśan*; in particular, what actually happens in the meeting of *darśan* and how is it different from meditation?

GURUDEV:

I find, when I go for *darśan*, either here or in Ganeshpuri or wherever, it's exciting. Even though Bhagavān and Baba are in the form of a statue or a picture now, the feeling is that I'm going to meet somebody.

When we grew up, the tradition was that wherever we saw Baba for the first time when we went to the ashram—even if he was a hundred feet away—we would *praṇām*. Whether he actually saw us or not, I don't know. But I always believed that seeing happened. That is what *darśan* is.

I read a quote recently: "The saint is the man who walks through the dark paths of the world, himself a light." When we offer our salutations to a saint, we offer it not to that individual; our salutations are to the light.

In the *Devī Stotram*, we sing, *Namas-tasyai namo namaḥ*: "I offer salutations again and again."

You can think of *darśan* as a moving meditation. In formal meditation, you are physically seated and still and quiet. You feel the vastness, the expanse, and the light within, and you try to become established in that. It's the same in *darśan*. But you have to prepare yourself in the correct way.

When you are in line for *darśan*, in the moments preceding it, as well as after it has happened, I think your focus has to be on the same feeling that is there during the actual moment of *darśan*.

Darśan means "to see." So the question is "What am I seeing?" It's not just about seeing a body that is physically present; it is about seeing the light, or the Self, or the divinity, within yourself.

In the traditional Indian *darśan*, male devotees do a *praṇām* that is fully flat. The women have their own way, which is not fully flat. Some people talk about a *praṇām* as total surrender—no part of them is held back.

Having watched *darśan* over the years, you can see those who go through the whole process of humble surrender, and the gentleness and softness that come with it. Others do it because they feel that it's part of a ritual. Yet others only do it because it needs to be done. It's interesting to watch all of the individual variations that take place.

I don't think you can actually make *darśan* happen, other than to be in that space and allow it to happen. When it does, it's wonderful. It's moving and very sublime.

If you are in the right space during *darśan*, I think you can fall in love. I don't mean in love with any person or individual, but with the feeling that is present within.

At the end of the *Haripāṭha*, we sing, "Give me the company of those who have unbroken love for You."

You can think of *darśan* as a moving meditation.

Unbroken Love (continued)

That means most of us have love, but it's broken. After experiencing the Broadway lights and the reflections of love in the external world, we feel "I love." But that love is transient.

Tukārām Mahārāj says, "I want the company of those who—no matter whether I go to them in the morning, noon, or night, or while they are sleeping, eating, or drinking—are in that state of love." And he says, "I'll never bore you, O Lord, because now I'm in that experience of love."

We can imagine that when such a person comes for darśan, it is a very different experience.

I remember back in 1983, when we were in Haridwar, there was an elderly saint, maybe sixty or seventy years old. They called him Nārada. He would walk around singing songs by Tukārām and Mīrābāī and others. Of course, most people thought he was crazy because he would break into song or express his devotion at any moment, anywhere. I think it depended on the person in front of him, and whether he felt that person would be receptive to his outburst of love. Unfortunately, people didn't understand him, so they left him alone. When he died, nobody knew for three days. On the third day, they broke into his room because he hadn't been out.

Sometimes you see a person who goes around saying, "I love God. I love life. I love..." Yet, if you really look at that person's face, you have to wonder.

I think we have to bring ourselves to the experience of unbroken love. Then every action we perform—whether it is in darśan or just in life—can be done with that feeling of love.

In the *Bhakti Sūtras*, the sage says that when a saint goes to a holy place, a place of pilgrimage, that place becomes blessed. Then everybody else who goes there feels uplifted. Whereas those people go there to unload their darkness and grab some light, the saint simply goes to be there.

For example, you can think of it this way. You have different kinds of friends. Some friends come, and you think, "Uh-oh." You realize they have come to say something you don't really want to hear. Another kind of friend comes, and you think, "Wow. I've been waiting to see you." Both are friends. You don't have antagonism toward either, but you know the difference: one comes with darkness and wishes to take light and joy; the other comes to share in the light and joy.

Over time, you have to ask yourself, "Am I the one who, when I come, people think uh-oh?" Possible. "Or am I the kind who is joyously welcomed, unknowingly welcomed?"

Often people say they don't know how they are perceived. But I think each of us does know. Because, the scriptures tell us, the light of knowledge is present in each and every one of us.

So I think darśan can be approached in the same way. Your experience can be one of "O my God"... and then you quickly go into meditation. Or you can be excited and you can bring that unbroken love.



We have to bring ourselves to the experience of unbroken love.

Belonging to a Lineage

QUESTION:

My question is about the difference between a *dīkṣā* guru and a *śikṣā* guru. Can you speak about the nature of the *śikṣā* guru and what that relationship is like?

GURUDEV:

In India, we believe your connection to a lineage or a tradition is not from this lifetime but is a relationship that has been ongoing for lifetimes.

You might go to India and meet somebody like Bhagavān Nityānanda, for example, who doesn't speak, and yet you feel a connection to that lineage. You receive *dīkṣā*, initiation, because your relationship with that lineage has been ongoing. It will always land you in the right place. You will feel a sense of oneness, a sense of belonging, even if nothing is said or nothing transpires physically. Yet the yearning to know, to understand, to learn is there.

Somebody asked Baba a question: "Because a person is able to explain something very well, does that mean he is a *siddha*, a perfected master?" Baba said, "A perfected master doesn't have time to explain; he simply lives in that experience. A person who has time can study, can learn, and can express."

Swami Chinmāyānanda, for example, was very learned. He chose to travel the world for thirty or forty years and share as much as he could of the teachings. Of course, for many people, he was their Guru and the one from whom they got initiation. But then, he himself would point to his Guru, Swami

Tapovanji Mahārāj, or to Bhagavān Nityānanda and say, "They are great beings." He understood that, whereas *śikṣā* Gurus are able to express the Truth, these great *dīkṣā* Gurus actually live immersed in that which the *śikṣā* Gurus talk about.

If you travel to Benares or Haridwar, or Rishikesh, you will find many swamis who, if you ask them about a quote from the *Upaniṣads*, will not only know which *Upaniṣad* it is in, and which chapter it is in, but will know the exact section and the verse. That's how well-versed they are. Because that is what they do. But if you ask them to give you the kind of initiation you can receive sitting in front of a great sage—one who walks like a light—they will tell you, "I'm getting there." They'll acknowledge that they have the illumination that comes through words, through knowledge, but when it comes to the ability to transmit it in an instant, they are still getting there.

People really don't discuss this much. In India, it is common for people to take *sannyāsa* initiation in one place and to study somewhere else. I think they have a deep, often unspoken understanding about who is a *dīkṣā* Guru and where they need to go for initiation. But at the same time, they recognize that the method or tradition of that Guru may not appeal to or work best for the development of their mind.

As I said before, you have to feel within. And then, if you feel something is a few millimeters off, you go elsewhere, where you feel things can be set right.



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G L O S S A R Y

ārati

waving of lights to worship a deity

Bhakti Sūtras

scripture on divine love

Chinmāyānanda, Swami

[1916–1993] wrote commentary on the
Bhagavad Gītā

darśan

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

Devī Stotram

hymn to the Goddess

dīkṣā

initiation

Haripāṭha

long poem by Jñāneśvar

Mīrābāī

[1498-1547] poet-saint and queen

Nārada

divine sage

praṇām

prostration

sādhanā

spiritual practices

sannyāsa

renunciation

satsaṅg

in the company of the Truth

siddha

perfected master

śikṣā

teaching

Tapovan Mahārāj, Swami

[1889-1957] Hindu saint, Guru of Swami
Chinmāyānanda

Tukārām Mahārāj

[1608-1650] saint

Upaniṣads

ancient Hindu scriptures