

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 excerpts from the Guru Purnima Intensive held in July 2020.

The Two Wings of a Bird

With great respect and love, I would like to welcome everyone to this Intensive. While we feel and believe and think this is the first virtual intensive, I feel that great sages and Gurus—in their state of omniscience and omnipresence—have possibly always done this. They sat in one place, connecting to divine Consciousness and transmitting *śakti*, energy, to their devotees, disciples, and seekers all over the world. We’re using the internet in a positive way, in a way that will uplift everyone to the potential of what a human being can be—what a human being should be.

Baba Muktaṅanda always said that, like a bird, we have two wings: self-effort and grace. Grace, I believe, is always present. Effort is what each and every one has to put forth.

When you think about grace, think about an ant.

If that ant wishes to go a hundred kilometers, or a hundred miles, on its own, it will take a long time. It may take days, months, to make the journey. So much could happen to that little ant. It could be crushed along the way. In the end, it may or may not make the journey.

Now, imagine that very same ant could climb onto somebody’s clothing. It could travel in their vehicle with them. In this way, it could make the same journey of a hundred miles in two hours. On its own, it can encounter a lot of difficulty. But attached to somebody’s clothing, the journey can be done in a short time.

The Two Wings of a Bird (continued)

We are told that when we hold the hand of a great sage— or a great sage holds our hand—his or her experience, understanding, and illumination will grace us. It will bless us. Thus, our journey will also be smooth and easy. Before we know it, we will arrive at our destination.

In the 1970s, when people began to come to Baba and ask about meditation and *śaktipat*, he devised this program, which he called the “Intense.” Intense...intensive.

So here we are today, in 2020, finding ourselves in very interesting times. And I think it is a good time to reflect, to ponder, to ask ourselves, “How am I, as a human being? What am I doing to maintain myself? What am I doing to maintain those around me? What am I doing to make sure we stay in an uplifted state of mind?”

**Like a bird, we have
two wings: self-effort
and grace.**



Where Are You Going?

Baba's book *Where Are You Going?* explains his teachings very simply. The first chapter is "The Self." Baba loved talking about the Self, the *Ātman*—the divinity that dwells within each and every one of us. Therefore, his message was, "Meditate on your Self. Honor your Self. Worship your own Self. Respect your own Self. Your God dwells within you as You."

When we think about this message, we come to the realization that there's nothing we have to do but become aware of the divinity that dwells within each individual.

Baba says that, in a human being's life, the Self, the Truth, is what is worth attaining.

In his "Bhaja Govindam," Ādi Śaṅkarācārya tells us that because we are born, we die, and this cycle of birth and death continues. We come into the womb of the mother again and again. To break this cycle of birth and death, we must become free of all that takes place in society, in this life. It's not easy. One way to become free is to sing the name of God.

So Ādi Śaṅkarācārya says, "O foolish man, sing, sing! Chant, chant, chant! Sing the name of God."

That is what Baba Muktaṅanda meant when he told us, "Meditate!"

You come to the experience of meditation first by creating a practice of sitting. Clean your space, freshen up your

space. Regularly light lamps, light incense. Bring beautiful, fragrant flowers. Create externally that which you need to happen inside, within you.

Once you create all that externally, then sit in the space that's been cleaned, that's fragrant, that's lit, that's beautiful. Within your own mental space and emotional space, purity can then be generated. When you connect to the divinity that dwells within you, you come to experience the Self.

I often share that the Self is not an object you will run into. It's not something you will find. It's energy that is already there. It is the Consciousness that dwells within each of us. Because of its existence, we are what we are. We are who we are. We are in this human body. The most important thing each individual, each human, must know, is the Self, the *Ātman* that dwells within us.

The second chapter of *Where Are You Going?* is "The Mind." Each of us is very aware of our mind because the mind thinks, the mind decides. So much takes place in our mind.

I feel most of what we do in *sādhana* has to do with the mind. The mind right now is happy. In a matter of moments, it can get upset. The mind can be pleased. The mind can be angry. The mind can be so much.

As you sit in meditation, as you become quiet, as you become still, you begin to take a look at and think about, "What is it that's really going on within myself?"

The only way to become free is to sing the name of that divinity.

Where Are You Going? (continued)

The potential, the possibility, is great. You can be the divine Self. You can be Consciousness. Then why choose to be limited, why choose to be small?

The sages tell us, “The mind is the cause of bondage and of liberation.” So really, all you need to do is begin to understand your own mind.

Baba gave talks as we traveled around the world, called “The Mind: Friend or Enemy?” The *Bhagavad Gītā* says one is one’s own friend, one is one’s own enemy. One can uplift oneself, and one can bring oneself down. Once we connect to that divine Consciousness, we should try, through regular *sādhana*, practice, to come to a state of equilibrium, a state of equanimity.

One of the many gifts the Guru gives us is equanimity, stillness, steadiness. The fruit of meditation is stillness, is steadiness. No matter what happens, you don’t allow the mind to be affected. You remain steady, you remain still.

The third chapter of *Where Are You Going?* is “Inner Power.” The *Kātha Upaniṣad* says, “To find the Self, to know it, to experience it, you need inner strength.” Not outer physical strength, but inner strength.

So often when we look at our society today—and especially, I’m sure, if we look at what’s happened in the last two or three months—we see that the fear of death, the fear of sickness, has spread through this entire world. Instead of believing in myself, instead of believing in the strength that is within myself to fight all of this... we become weak. We succumb.

We always hear—and again, especially in these last two or three months—“build your immunity.” That means build your inner strength—what Baba calls your “inner power.” The inner power is nothing but that which comes from the Self.

If you look at a great sage in any tradition, anywhere in the world, you think, “Wow! What is it that he knows that I don’t know?” He believes in the power of the Self. He believes in that inner power. He believes in that inner strength.

The way to get there, Baba tells us in the next chapter, is mantra.

The mantra redeems us; it frees us. Find a mantra that when you sing it, when you repeat it, it brings you to a place of calmness.

You can do this at home. In the morning, you can play Baba singing the *Guru Gītā*. During the day, you can play various kirtans. At lunchtime, you can play Baba singing different songs, such as the *Siddha Gītā* or the *Viṣṇu Sahasranām*. In the late afternoon, you can play another kirtan. If you understand Hindi, or if you have talks with a translation in English, listen to Baba speaking and allow his words to soak into your being. You can end the day with the evening *Āratī*, the *Śiva Mahimnaḥ Stotram*, and Baba singing the *Devī Stotram*.

Light a lamp in the morning, light a lamp in the evening. Light some incense, bring some flowers, repeat the mantra. Whenever the mind goes off on a tangent, whenever it’s disturbed, take a moment, take a deep breath, and repeat the mantra. Become still. Let the mind become aware of the sound vibration of the mantra.

Of course, the mantra Baba Mukṭānanda gave everyone is *Om Namaḥ Śivāya*. He would say, “Repeat this, repeat this, repeat this. Wherever you go, repeat this.”

The only real quiet place is inside, is within. No matter how much you might find the quiet outside, the real quiet is inside each one’s own being.

Most of what we do in *sādhana* has to do with the mind.

Where Are You Going? (continued)

The mantra leads us to the next chapter, “Meditation.” I believe meditation is a natural outcome of becoming still, of becoming quiet. Each day, as you sit, as you practice being quiet, that quiet will begin to grow in your own mind.

Swami Chinmāyānandaji says, “Enjoy your own company. If you don’t enjoy your own company, why inflict it upon others?”

Mantra and meditation really emphasize this: enjoy your own company. Sit, find a place—whether it’s in nature outside or it’s in your own space inside—and just sit. I suggest to people, if you can’t do anything else, just find a nice, comfortable seat and sit. Create a habit, create a practice: sitting.

As you sit, as you become quiet, incorporate the mantra. Then whenever you find yourself in a place of total stillness, simply stay there. That is called *sahaja*, or natural, meditation.

The next chapter Baba comes to is “The Guru.” Baba believed that as much as we depend upon the external being, the external form, the Guru dwells within each and every one of us. So as we meditate, as we go inside, we come in touch with the Guru, which is the Ātman.

And the last chapter of Baba’s book is “The Religion of the Self.” The book begins with the Self and it ends with the Self. We have created all of these external religions, and we fight in the name of all of these religions, but there is only one religion that is true, and that is the religion of the Self.

If you have a copy of *Where Are You Going?*, take a look, read it. It’s so simple and yet not so easy to incorporate

it fully in your life. But I’m sure, as you ponder Baba’s words, you’ll find that you have naturally remembered his teachings at different times as you go about life.

These teachings must become, as Baba says, a part of you. You must imbibe them. Every cell, every pore, of your being should be filled with these teachings.



No matter how much you might find the quiet outside, the real quiet is inside each one’s own being.

At the Crossroads

How God appears to you depends on your relationship to Him.

A boy asks his father, “What is the size of God, of the Guru?”

As the father ponders this question, he sees an airplane way up in the sky. He asks his son, “What is the size of that airplane?”

The son says, “It’s very small.”

The father then takes the son to the airport, where the airplanes are parked. He says, “What is the size of that airplane?”

The son says, “Huge, large, extra-large.”

So the father says, “How God appears to you depends on your relationship to Him. If you’re far from Him, you can barely see Him. You can barely feel His presence. He seems so tiny and so small. The closer you are, the larger His presence is in your life.”

It is up to each of us how we develop this relationship, how we maintain it, and how closely we remain in communion, in contact, with that divinity, with that grace, in our life.

So often, time is simply wasted in trying to deal with our own mind, with our own emotions—and then with the minds and emotions of our family, friends, coworkers, neighbors.

Kabir, in his poem, says, “Don’t get caught in all the small, petty things of life.” He says you’ve been given all these gifts—eyes, hands, tongue, ears, and so on.

He says, “The eyes are for *darśan*, to see greatness, goodness, the wonderful things of life.” Don’t simply look at all of the nonsense that exists in life; change your perception. See the beauty that exists in this world.

Kabir says, “Use these hands to do good things, to do charity, to help others, to be kind, to be compassionate.” You can use your hand to slap somebody, or you can use it to stroke them with love.

At the end of the day, the choice about what you do with your eyes, what you do with your hands is yours. Become big, become magnanimous, as Bhagavan Nityānanda tells us.

Kabir says you’ve been given this tongue, which can say beautiful words, uplifting words, pleasing words. It can also do the opposite, of course. It’s either one of the greatest tools or one of the greatest weapons given by the divine. The best is to use it to sing the name of God.

The poet-saint Janābāi of Maharashtra says, “This name of God, which gives us so much comfort, sing it with love, sing it with appreciation, sing it with joy.” That is the choice you have with your tongue.

And you have ears. You can watch and listen to television. You can watch and listen on the internet. You can gossip with so many different people and fill your mind with all that. Then you sit for meditation and say, “Oh my God, I need to filter out all of this.”

At the Crossroads (continued)

So Kabīr says, “Listen to knowledge, listen to the scriptures, listen to the words of the sages. Uplift yourself. Uplift your mind, uplift your emotions; uplift them by listening to all of these great teachings.”

I tell people, in this day and time, it’s so easy: you just plug in the USB and turn on the teachings. You can either watch videos or listen to the audio. You don’t have to do anything else; you can just sit and simply listen to all this.

Kabīr says, “Listen, O *sādhu*, O noble person! Gold comes from a mine. In the same way, this human body is a mine. And within this mine lives divinity, lives that which you are seeking.”

Think about it. What am I actually doing with my life? What am I doing with my days? What am I doing with my time? Is it just frivolous? Is it just used up, and at the end of the day, I’m tired and don’t even know what I did with my day? Or do I feel uplifted? Do I feel happy?

Each one of us has a choice every single moment. Society will tell us many things it thinks we should do. At the same time, the great sages and the Guru and the divine within each one of us speak to us constantly, telling us what we must do. The choice in each moment, again, is in your hands. Which path do you choose?

The original cover of Baba Muktaṅanda’s book *Where Are You Going?*, with which we began this Intensive, showed a man standing at the crossroads of two different paths. One is a difficult path, filled with many obstacles. The other is a straight, simple path. The individual has a choice, standing here at the crossroads: I’ll go this way or I’ll go that way. So you have a choice. Do you choose the difficult path? Do you take the simple path?

The path seems simple. It seems easy. But it’s not always so simple and easy to be simple. Because you have your own complexities, your own issues. And society only adds to that. As you listen to the poet-saints and all they have to say, remember, you have a choice.



**Each one of us has
a choice every single
moment.**

Be the Messenger

We can offer the teachings and the grace of the Guru, for the upliftment of society.

I'll end with a story.

A young boy comes home from school. He tells his father, "The teacher gave me homework. The homework is very simple: hug ten people and tell them, 'Be patient. Trust life. I love you.'"

The father says, "Okay, we'll go to the mall tomorrow morning. You can do your homework and hug ten people." This is taking place during normal times, when you can go to a mall and hug people.

When they wake up the next morning, Sunday morning, it's pouring rain. The father says, "Look, it's raining. Who will come to the mall?"

The son says, "Look, Dad, you promised me. I have to do this homework. So let us go."

The father agrees.

They go to the mall. The boy walks around. He goes up to nine different people and hugs them.

After a while, the father says, "Look, nobody else is coming. Let's go home."

The boy agrees, sadly. The teacher said ten, and he's only at nine, so he needs one more. On the way home, they drive past a house. He says to his father, "Let's stop at this house. Let me knock on the door and hug the person who lives there."

The father agrees. He pulls the car over.

The boy gets out. He goes and knocks on that door.

It takes a little while. Finally, a woman with a very sad look opens the door and gently asks, "What can I do for you, son?"

With a bright smile, radiant eyes, the boy says, "Ma'am, my teacher told me to hug ten people and tell them, 'Be patient. Trust life. I love you.'"

The old woman breaks down and begins to cry.

The father, who is watching from his car, gets out and walks over. He thinks, "What has my son said? Why is the woman crying?"

The woman invites the son and father into her house, sits them down, gives them a cup of tea. She says, "A year ago my husband died. I've been living here totally alone. And today the loneliness overcame me. I thought, 'What is the point of living?'"

"So I got a chair and a rope. I was standing under the fan, getting ready to hang myself, when I heard a knock at my door. Nobody comes to visit me, so I thought, 'Who is that?' I wasn't going to answer the door, but he kept knocking. So I thought, 'Well, let me go and see who it is.'"

"This young child said his teacher gave him the homework to hug ten people, and he had only hugged nine, so he wished to hug me as the tenth person. And then he gave me his message: 'Be patient. Trust life. I love you.'"

Be the Messenger (continued)

“All of a sudden, I thought to myself, ‘This is a message from God!’”

The storyteller tells us that she realizes, “Now I no longer want to die. I don’t want to waste away this life. I would like to do something productive.”

Each one of us has this ability, as Kabir says, to stand by someone. If nothing else, you can just listen to them. Or you can stand by them and give them positive thoughts, positive feelings. You never know: you could be the messenger who saves someone.

I take this opportunity to offer my salutations and greetings to you, in all different parts of the world, in whatever language you will see or read or hear this. I pray that the feeling of the Guru, of grace, is conveyed through this medium, through Shanti Mandir and all our various activities. What is important is that, as an ashram, we remain open to each and every individual, in whatever way possible, so we can offer the teachings and the grace of the Guru, for the upliftment of society.



You could be the messenger who saves someone.



G L O S S A R Y

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya

[788-820] sage, originator of Advaita Vedānta

āratī

waving of lights to worship a deity

Ātman

the soul, Self

Bhagavad Gītā

Hindu scripture

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

Guru Gītā

commentary on the Guru

Janābāī

[13th century] poet-saint of Maharashtra

Kabīr

[1440-1518] poet-saint and weaver

Kaṭha Upaniṣad

a Vedic scripture

kirtan

chanting

Om Namaḥ Śivāya

mantra; literally, “I bow to the divine”

sādhanā

spiritual practices

sādhu

a mendicant

sahaja

natural

śaktithe creative energy of the universe;
the awakened spiritual energy**śaktipat**

transmission of śakti by the Guru

Siddha Gītā

song of the Siddhas

Śiva Mahimnaḥ Stotram

hymn in praise of Śiva

Viṣṇu Sahasranām

thousand names of Viṣṇu