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Siddha Marg

© Shanti Mandir Issue 12 October 2012

LOOK TO GOD RESIDING IN THE SKY OF THE HEART.

BHAGAVAN NITYĀNANDA*

Yoga has always declared that the nonphysical space of the heart is where Consciousness dwells. Science is now coming to see this, too.

So much is going on in our hearts and minds. So much stuff has been stored within us over lifetimes. For this reason, the heart has to be cleansed, purified.

How do we purify the heart? Through all the practices we do: chanting, meditating, study, contemplation.

MAHĀMANDALESHWAR SWAMI NITYĀNANDA

* *The Sky of the Heart,* Rudra Press, 1996, p. 212.

This issue of Siddha Marg *presents extracts from talks Mahāmandaleshwar Swami Nityānanda gave during the spring and summer of 2012—on the anniversary of Baba Muktānanda's birthday and on the lunar and solar commemorations of Bhagavān Nityānanda's* puṇyatithī.

A Magnanimous Heart

With great respect and love, good morning and welcome to *satsaṅg* on this Sunday.

Today is Baba's birthday, so everybody will expect me to say something about Baba. But I find it safer not to say too much. Because that makes it too emotional. So I will try to talk around the subject.

I have a little book that lives by my bedside on the table. It's called the *Gopīka Gītam* and it is about the state in which the *gopīs* lived.

Many of us think to ourselves, "I love." Whomever we love, we feel "I love." But over time I have realized that though we think we love, so much of our ego is tied up in that love. If we really love, we do not have to think that we love.

A mango doesn't think to itself, "I am sweet because I am a mango." (And I like mangoes.) A mango, by nature, is sweet. Of course, we humans have messed with the mango, but that's a different story.

As humans, if we go to the true place within ourselves, we are love.

I often read just the first two pages of this book; I hardly venture farther. The first two pages are by Swami Vivekānanda, a disciple of the great sage Rāmakrishna

A Magnanimous Heart (continued)

Paramahaṁsa. He says, "So long as there is selfishness in the heart, so long is love of God impossible."

If we think to ourselves, "I love," we have to understand how Swami Vivekānandaji describes the gopīs here. Keep in mind that the gopīs are not bound to the particular time when Lord Kṛṣṇa lived in Vrindāvan or Mathurā. The sages consider that anyone who loves God unselfishly at all times is a gopī.

We try in our minds, in our own way, to understand a great sage. Recently, on the day I left Magod, I shared the story of Kabīr and Kamāl. It's a story we have heard many times.

Some people go to the poet-saint Kabīr and ask him, "What is a disciple?"

As humans, if we go to the true place within ourselves, we are love.

Kabīr is weaving away and he drops his shuttle. Although it is the middle of the day, he asks Kamāl to bring a lamp to look for the shuttle.

Kamāl brings the lamp. They look for the shuttle and find it. Kabīr goes back to weaving.

After about fifteen, thirty minutes, the people ask again: "Kabīr Sāhib, you have not answered our question."

So he tells Kamāl, "Bring rice pudding for all these people who have come, and put salt in it."

Kamāl serves rice pudding to all who have come. They spit it out because how should rice pudding taste? It should be sweet.

Again, after fifteen or thirty minutes, they say, "Kabīr Sāhib, you have not answered our question. What is a disciple?"

Kabīr says, "I gave you two examples! Not once did Kamāl ask me, 'Master, do you really need the lamp when you can see?' I told him, 'Bring the lamp.' He brought the lamp even though I could see the shuttle, he could see the shuttle, and you all could see the shuttle. I ordered rice pudding and I said, 'Put salt in it.' He didn't say, 'You mean sugar.' He simply put in salt and brought it." Kabīr says, "This is my answer."

Our rational mind says, "I want to understand the Guru." But really we are thinking, "The Guru must understand me!"

Many people asked Baba questions. They always wanted Baba to give them the answer *they* wanted. But the Guru gives the answer *he* wants. It's not necessarily what we want.

When they didn't like his answer, they would say, "Okay, you think about it, I'll be back tomorrow."

Of course, when they came back the next day, what answer was he going to give? The same he gave the day before.

Because, for the Guru, the Truth was, is, and will be. For us, the Truth is what I want, how I want, the way I want. Therefore, we have a problem with the Truth. We want the Truth to be how *we* think it should be.

Therefore, Swami Vivekānanda says understanding the love of the gopīs is "too holy to be attempted without giving up everything."

We think we want to give up everything, but we only want to give up that which we think we don't need.

People always tell me as I travel the world, "It seems that people who are *bhaktas,* who follow the path of devotion to God, have the most difficulty in life." They ask, "Is

A Magnanimous Heart (continued)

there something wrong in worshipping God, that God doesn't look after us?"

If you read the work of the poet-saints, they tell you that the sign of the touch of God's grace is that everything you love materially starts disappearing. Because God wants to know, "Do you love *me*?" Meaning, do you love the divinity that dwells within you or do you love the sofa, the bed, the car, your possessions, more?

Therefore, Swami Vivekānanda says that to understand the love of the divine, you must be able to give up, to let go. Instead of suffering within when a physical possession goes away, simply say, "It was there while it was time for me to enjoy it, and now somebody else needs it more."

For the Guru, the Truth was, is, and will be. For us, the Truth is what I want, how I want, the way I want.

Today is Baba's birthday. What is the best way to celebrate how a great sage, a great master, a great *siddha,* lived in his or her time?

We hear the stories of what others experienced in the sage's presence. And I often ask the people who share, "Today, thirty years later, how does that grace affect your life? The peacock feathers, the touch, the heena, the food, his company, his grace, his blessings—what are all these doing for you today, now? Are you any wiser or just as ignorant as you were?"

Ask yourself: Are you able to instantly go into a state of bliss, whatever bliss may be to you? Are you able to just let go and say, "Okay, let's have fun" or do you say, "Wait a minute, I've got to first figure this out"?

When we think about Baba, we think of his name, Muktānanda, the bliss of freedom. One of the *Śiva Sūtras* says, *Siddhaḥ svātantra bhāvaḥ*. "A siddha lives always in the state of freedom."

What is freedom? For most of us, freedom means "I can get up whenever I want. I can go wherever I want. I can eat whenever I want. I can sleep whenever I want." Right? We don't think of ourselves as someone in a prison cell who cannot do what he or she wants whenever he or she wants.

Nevertheless, a sage looks at us and says, "You are bound."

Because right now it is your mind that is enjoying you. You're sitting here, and for a moment you are having a wonderful time. And in the next moment, the mind says, "I don't like what he just said!" It's as if a tsunami has come, and the whole world has collapsed. You think, "Should I leave?"

But then you think, "No, I want to eat lunch, so I'm going to have to put up with this. If I go home, I'm not going to get lunch. And I don't want to eat on the way." So you tell the mind, "It's okay, we'll just forget that statement he made."

Think to yourself, are you really as free as you think you are? Or can the mind bind you in an instant? Imagine living in the experience where all this exists, but nothing bothers you.

The lover sees nothing in the world except the beloved alone, Kṛṣṇa alone. The face of every being becomes Kṛṣṇa. Even his own face looks like Kṛṣṇa. His soul has become tinged with the color of Kṛṣṇa.

When are you truly immersed in love? When everywhere you look, you see nothing but the one you love.

In that state, duality has disappeared; there is only oneness. When you look inside, you see the One. When

A Magnanimous Heart (continued)

you look outside, you see the One. There is no other. There is nothing else.

If you have never experienced this, you will not understand this. It's as simple as that.

You can try to twist this as you want. You can say, "Okay, I have to see everyone as one: 'One! One! One! One! One!'" It's not going to work.

I read a story some years ago. A swami goes to Vrindāvan, and when he sees women, he looks away.

A gopī asks him, "Why do you behave like this?"

He replies, "I am a man. So I treat women with respect."

The gopī says, "We thought there was no other man in Vrindāvan but Kṛṣṇa."

To the gopī, individual consciousness is unimportant. There is only oneness.

Many people want to eat ice cream, but they are afraid of the sugar and the calories and the fat. So they ask the person serving in the shop, "Can I have a taste of that?"

The first spoon you get is always a good helping. Then you ask for a second flavor. And that is a little bit smaller. By the fifth or sixth spoon, the person is only giving you a very teeny tiny bite because he realizes you're not going to buy any ice cream, you're only going to taste.

Many people love in the same way. You are afraid of the calories and the fat of love. So you just give a little spoon to somebody. You want to protect yourself, so you give a little taste. Protect yourself from what? I don't know, but you want to protect yourself.

The sign of the touch of God's grace is that everything you love materially starts disappearing. Because God wants to know, "Do you love *me*?"

If you went to a Siddha Guru like Baba Muktānanda, it didn't matter how you came. Because, to him, his shop was always open. Even the taste everybody received was at least a few scoops.

One of Bhagavān Nityānanda's teachings was *viśala hṛdāya*. A magnanimous heart.

Most of us don't really understand this. For example, when you want to give something, you think, "Okay, this I want. That I still need. That I may need. This my father-in-law's mother-in-law gave to him, so it is very meaningful."

You don't quite know what you should give, so you give that little spoon. You say, "Take this for now, till I find something I really feel I want to give you."

You don't have to agree with me. But I know this from experience as I travel the world. I ask people sometimes, "Let's share."

They say, "Whoa! What do you mean?"

I say, "Share means share."

And they say, "You mean give to everybody who comes or to those who stay after the satsaṅg?"

I say, "Give and share mean to everybody who comes."

"That," they say, "will be a hundred people. Let's wait till everybody goes, and then there will be maybe five people left."

I say, "That is not sharing. That is selecting."

They say, "But I don't think I have enough for everybody."

A Magnanimous Heart (continued)

This is not the experience of a magnanimous heart.

When I say to ask yourself, "Thirty years later, how has the Guru affected my life?" the one thing you should be able to say is "I am magnanimous."

Of course, I know you are not going to say that aloud. But at least you can say it to yourself. You don't lose anything by saying it. Because it is free.

You can at least start to imagine in your own mind: "I have become magnanimous."

Even so, you may be afraid that if you say, "I am magnanimous," you won't know what to do if somebody comes to you saying "give."

When the sage says to be magnanimous, he means you must let go of the smallness that comes from the mind.

Imagine living in the experience where all this exists, but nothing bothers you.

I want you to understand that the generous scoops I said Baba shared were of *śakti*, of the energy. I think if you talk to anybody who lived with him for a period of time, the experience they would share would be of that śakti.

Yet when we try to understand what śakti is, the human mind, in its limited state, cannot easily grasp that.

In 2007, we were traveling through Western Australia, celebrating Baba's 100th birthday. Two sisters showed up at a satsaṅg.

One sister had woken up one night with the word *muktānanda* in her mind. She didn't know what that meant, so she called her sister the next morning. She asked, "Do you know what a muktānanda is?"

Her sister said, "Why?"

She said, "It came in my dream last night, muktānanda."

The sister was smart. She said, "We'll google it."

And so they googled and found that a satsaṅg was happening the next evening near their town. And they shared this story with somebody who was on tour with us.

Now you ask the rational mind, "How does somebody in Western Australia, who has no knowledge of yoga, have one word—muktānanda—come in a dream?"

You sit here and say, "Okay, I understand the Guru. I understand the disciple. I understand the śakti. I understand how all of this works."

I say you don't.

Because I think if you asked the Guru, the Guru would also say, "I don't understand. I know it works, and that is all."

Look at your own life. Then try to rationalize in your mind how it all works. You think you are the orchestrator of life, and therefore life works. Because you are making it work. But truly, that is an illusion.

There is a greater force, and that is what makes it all work. The best would be if we simply allowed ourselves to be in its hands and let it do what it wants to do.

So, as we celebrate Baba's 104th birthday—and hopefully more as we all continue doing our practice and *sādhanā* together—allow yourself, as Swami Vivekānanda says, to become free of selfishness, to become free of name and fame, and of this temporary world.

Only then will you understand the love of the gopīs.

Pure Feeling

We have gathered in this temple at Shanti Mandir in Walden to celebrate the fifty-first year since the passing, puṇyatithī, of *avadhūt* Bhagavān Nityānanda. At his shrine in Ganeshpuri, in a few minutes, they'll sing what is known in the Marāṭhī language as a *śerāratī,* an *āratī* that supposedly puts him to sleep.

This day is celebrated in India wherever a great sage has passed. People gather, as we have gathered here today, to honor him and to seek his blessings and his grace. We pray that as we follow the path the sages followed and laid out for us, we may live in the great way they have lived.

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Last year we were in Ganeshpuri at this time. It was just a little bit later in July because this day comes, according to the moon, on the twelfth day after Guru Pūrṇimā. In 1961, the full moon of Guru Pūrṇimā was on the 3rd of July, and twelve days after Guru Pūrṇimā, Bhagavān Nityānanda left his body.

Two teachings that he gave are *śuddha-bhāvena,* pure feeling, and viśala hṛdāya, a magnanimous heart.

I believe that living according to these two teachings—to always have pure feelings, to always be big—would be a challenge for most people. Imagine that you must be pure in every single encounter you have in life. And whenever you share, you must be magnanimous in your giving.

Sometimes when I think about life, I think we are most interested in listening to our own band. And we are most interested in sharing about our own band. I hope you understand what I mean by *band*. I know you don't walk around with a piano or a drum or music. But each of us wants everybody to hear us. We think, "*I* have a story. *I* want to tell you something. Come, listen to *me*."

The great sages, such as avadhūt Bhagavān Nityānanda, spent so much of their life in silence. There was no story.

But as soon as somebody sits next to us, we feel impelled to speak. It's as if our two ears and one mouth are the band. A sage has a few thousand ears—meaning those of the devotees—and yet he sits quietly. Nothing impels him to feel, "I want to say something."

Each day here we sing the *Avadhūt Stotram*. There are sixteen verses, and fifteen of them describe the qualities of such a being.

We can take each word to heart. You may want to pick a verse each year and develop in your life the one quality it describes, and become like that. For example, one verse says,

> "He watches praise and blame
> as nothing but a play of the mind.
> He simply revels constantly in the play of the Self.
> To such a great soul, the avadhūt, I offer my
> salutations again and again."

As we go through life, when somebody speaks nicely, we get excited. And when somebody doesn't speak nicely, we get upset. But a sage realizes all this is nothing but a play of the mind.

How do you get to that state? You can't just wake up one day and think, "I'll do it. I'll make it." It only comes from constant practice, from constant practice.

Pure Feeling (continued)

You can't say to yourself, "I will be for good one day." Goodness comes from being good all the time.

If we can remember to always have a pure feeling, to tell ourselves, "I will always be big," I think we can all do a lot in life.

Each one of us takes divinity with us wherever we go. All the teachings you read about, all the teachings you hear, need to become a part of your life. It's not so important that you have heard them or read about them. What is important is that they are part of your life, part of your actions.

He passed away fifty-one years ago.

You may want to pick a verse each year and develop in your life the one quality it describes, and become like that.

Many of us could say, "I've gone to his shrine." Many of us could say, "I have celebrated at his shrine every year." But as soon as you walk out of the shrine, do you think, "I am who I am"? Do you become who you were before you walked in; do you become that with which you identify?

If even one layer is peeled off every time you sit in his presence or remember his teaching, then you know something from his company has washed upon you.

So, allow yourself to remember, to feel, to think what that is. And truly, that is what each and every one of us carries in our own being, in our own heart.

We'll chant *Oṁ Namo Bhagavate Nityānandaya*. They sing it in Ganeshpuri with a few different variations, so you'll have to listen.

Close your eyes. If some tears flow, you aren't crying, you're just filled with joy. If tears don't flow, then you know you have something wrong. At least that's my prescription. Because when your whole being is filled with that experience, you reverberate with it.

Be Free

As we were chanting, I realized this completes ten years of satsaṅg here in San Rafael. And we see the fruit of that. All along the coast, from here all the way down to Tustin in Southern California, we have satsaṅgs.

All this started from a sage who sat in the little village of Ganeshpuri and tried to be free of institutions and organizations, and all the trappings that go along with that.

When you go to that village, you find three places: one where his *samādhi* shrine is, where he's buried; one known as Kailās, where we see the pictures of him walking; and the third place, called Bangalorewalla, where he left his body.

All this started from a sage who sat in the little village of Ganeshpuri.

He lived there from possibly 1936 to 1961. It is said he moved to those three places because whenever he stayed in one place, somebody would take charge of that place. The person would decide he was now the doorkeeper, the one who decided when you could see Bhagavān, when you could not see him, who was allowed to see him, who was not allowed to see him, and so on.

When Bhagavān felt he was being controlled in this manner, he moved to a new place. By the time somebody emerged to take charge of that new place, Bhagavān moved to a third place.

This is how it goes. A sage simply wants to sit, meditate, and radiate the experience of Consciousness—*cidākāśa,* "the sky of the heart," as he called it. But we humans want to put it inside a bottle, label it, and sell it, or whatever we want to do.

The sage simply tells us, "Be free. Be free. Be free."

Yet because that is not our experience, we think, "Okay, how do I bind the sage?"

The sage can never be bound, can never be trapped. He remains free, and urges us to be free.

We were in the village of Ganeshpuri last year, celebrating Bhagavān's fiftieth *mahāsamādhi*. It was a powerful experience. For three days, we did lots of chanting. We chanted the *Guru Gītā* in his shrine, and just lived among the few thousand people on whom it dawned to be there for the celebration. In the midst of all that, the thought arose, "What must it have been like to sit in the physical presence of such a great sage and experience his energy?"

We can only imagine.

Often people ask, "What are your memories of Baba?"

I think my best memory of Baba is that he was so full of life. He was always excited. At least twice every day he would say, "With great love and respect, I welcome you all with all my heart." It never bored or tired him, and he never changed the way he said that statement.

In our society today we think, "I want to change. I want to bring something new, something different." But as Baba always said, the Truth never changes.

As you live your life, as you go to satsaṅg, as you go through whatever you go through in life, constantly remind yourself of that Truth, that divinity, which dwells within you.

GLOSSARY

ārati
waving of lights to worship a deity

avadhūt
one who has gone beyond body consciousness

Avadhūta Stotram
verses about the qualities of a sage

bhakta
one who follows the path of devotion

cidākāśa
space of Consciousness

Gopīka Gītam
Hindu scripture on devotion

gopī
devotee of Kṛṣṇa

Guru Gītā
commentary on the Guru

Guru Pūrṇimā
full moon of the Guru in July

hṛdāya
heart

Kabīr
[1440-1518] poet-saint and weaver

Kamāl
son and disciple of Kabīr

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

mahāsamādhi
final merging with the Absolute

Mathurā
birthplace of Kṛṣṇa

Paramahaṁsa
one established in the awareness "I am That"

puṇyatithī
final departure from the physical body

Rāmakrishna
[1836-1886] devotional Bengali saint

sādhanā
spiritual practices

Sāhib
term of respect

samādhi
merging with the Absolute

satsaṅg
in the company of a knower of the Truth (saint)

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GLOSSARY
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śerāratī
āratī performed at a puṇyatithī

śakti
the creative energy of the universe;
the awakened spiritual energy

siddha
perfected master

Śiva Sūtras
9th c. text of Kashmir Shaivism

viśala
magnanimous

Vivekānanda, Swami
[1863-1902] disciple of Rāmakrishna

Vrindāvan
where the gopīs lived with Kṛṣṇa

SHANTI MANDIR
Temple of Peace